

Ritual as Ideology
in an Indigenous Chinese Christian Church

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RITUAL AS IDEOLOGY IN A INDIGENOUS
CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Abstract

Morris Aaron Fred

This work is an ethnography of an indigenous Chinese Christian church, known as the Taipei Local Church or the Assembly Hall Church. I chose to work with such a group because I believe that a marginal group can often tell us much about the larger unit from which it seeks to separate itself. Although this is a Christian church, it is a Chinese religious movement. It is an indigenous church in the sense that it repudiates organizational and financial ties with foreign missionary groups and develops its ideology and organization in response to local conditions. The church came into being in the early 1920s in Shanghai under the leadership of Watchman Nee. Toward the end of the Chinese Civil War, Nee sent one of his co-workers, Witness Lee, to Taiwan. Nee remained on the mainland, was imprisoned and later died in 1972. With Nee on the mainland, the church's leadership reins passed to Witness Lee whose organizational prowess led to a church membership in Taiwan of over 40,000 as well as growth in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the United States.

While this dissertation attempts to provide an ethnographic overview of life in the Taipei Local Church, I have organized its chapters in order to emphasize certain theoretical problems in the study of religion. One of these most pertinent problems was raised during my research when I became aware of the split which occurred in church ranks in 1966. Why the split occurred and how Witness Lee had revitalized church organization after the split became the focal point for examining more general aspects of church life.

In the introduction the theoretical framework for my work is set by the use of works by Peter Berger and Franz Schurmann. Here I assert (from Berger) that any church religious growth is dependent on maintaining the dialectic between the group's world view and actual experiences. I suggest that the split occurred because of a breakdown of this dialectic, and that Lee's restructuring of the church organization (in concrete terms) also involved his rebuilding of this dialectic (in more abstract terms). In treating the church as an organization, I use Schurmann's definition of ideology as a set of ideas utilized for the purpose of reaching organizational goals. Since in the church's case, these goals cannot be reached without the continuance of the religious dialectic, Lee's means for rebuilding the dialectic can be viewed as ideology.

Because of certain requirements set forth in the group's world view, Lee relies primarily on changes in church ritual to revitalize the dialectic and ensure church growth. Hence, I have chosen as the title for this work, Ritual as Ideology in an Indigenous Chinese Christian Church.

In Chapters II, III, and IV, I present background material related to church history, organization, and world view in order to show the relevant features of the aforementioned dialectic. In the next two chapters, I examine the processes of incorporating individuals into the church by gaining both their social commitment to church life and their perceptual commitment to the group's religious world view. In the latter case, I assert a comparison with the process of thought reform on the Chinese mainland (other comparative features with the mainland case are treated in the Afterword). Finally, I return to the features of the 1966 split in church ranks and conclude with data to support my contention that Lee has used ritual as ideology to facilitate church organizational growth and unity.

*Elizabeth C. Lee, Chairman
Dissertation Committee*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an ethnography of a Chinese Christian community, the Taipei Local Church. The church today numbers about 20,000 in Taipei, with the same number of members spread throughout the rest of the island in other local churches. While the church has diffused throughout the world, I am unaware of its total membership. My justification for studying the church lies in my belief that in concentrating on a Christian group in a country in which only five percent of the population consider themselves to be Christian, I might provide a framework for appraising urban life in Taipei in general. Owen Lattimore, in his study of Chinese history, suggests that the best means for gaining insight into the changes which took place at the core of Chinese culture is to note the adjustments at the frontier areas of the Empire (Lattimore, 1962). It was with this perspective in mind that I have concentrated on a group of people who consider themselves and are considered by others to be at the margins of Chinese society. As actors who are consciously adjusting strategies in their attempts to separate themselves from the core values and activities of life

in Taipei, the church members offer the ethnographer insight into many of the complexities of life in urban Taiwan. Hence, although the prime boundaries of my interest centered around life within the church, the evangelical pursuits of the members of the Taipei Local Church extended my area of concern beyond the church grounds into other urban phenomena. These soon proved to be pertinent to understanding the church's central features.

Since its outset on Taiwan in 1947, the Local Church's size of over 40,000 members makes it the largest of the indigenous Chinese Christian churches. Here indigenous refers to the complete absence of both organizational ties with or financial support from any foreign missionary group. The church came into being in China in 1923 under the leadership of Nee Two Sheng (倪柝聲 ; English church name: Watchman Nee). Toward the end of the Chinese Civil War, one of Nee's co-workers, Lee Chang Shou (李常受 ; church name: Witness Lee) was sent with his family to Taiwan. Nee himself felt he should remain with his flock on the mainland, was imprisoned by the communists and died in the summer of 1972. With Nee on the mainland, the effective leadership of the church was in the hands of Witness Lee, whose organizational prowess has led to church growth in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Hong Kong and since 1960, in the United States. (For a more detailed description of church history, see Chapter II).

In the succeeding chapters I will examine life in the Taipei Local Church by focusing on the relationship between changes in church ritual and organization and the maintenance of the group's world view. I became aware of the importance of this relationship as a result of my reconstruction of the sequence of historical events which led to a split in church ranks in 1966. Comparison of church organization and ritual before and after the split has directed my overall theoretical perspective used in this dissertation.

This theoretical perspective follows very closely that of Peter Berger in The Social Reality of Religion (1969). There, Berger sees society as a product of human activity which in turn acts back on its producer. This fundamental dialectic between man and society consists of three steps: externalization, objectification, and internalization. The first Berger considers as the outpouring of human beings into the world in various activities and experiences. Objectification is the attainment by the products of these activities of a reality of their own. Finally, internalization is the reappropriation by men of this reality so that there is a congruence between the objective world and the subjective world of the individual (Berger, 1969, 3-4).

Berger asserts that the same human activity that produces society also produces religion (48). To put this in terms that

will be used throughout this work, I am contending that in the case of religion, externalization involves partaking in religious activities and experiences; objectification is the ordering of the products of these activities in a particular world view; and internalization is making the objective reality of this world view conform to the subjective consciousnesses of individuals within the group or society. The success of this dialectic depends on the extent to which each stage is seen as an expression of the same reality at a different level: social, perceptual, or individual. Berger elaborates on this dialectic by placing emphasis on the fact that the worlds of any group

are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness), depends upon specific social processes, namely those processes that ongoingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of these social processes threatens the (objective and subjective) reality of the worlds in question. Thus each world requires a social "base" for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This "base" may be called its plausibility structure. (Berger, 1969, 45)

For the brethren, the plausibility structure on which the reality of their world is based is the church organization itself. As will be seen in Chapter II, this plausibility structure was undermined by the intrusion of an outsider who attacked the principle on which church organization had rested.

The result was a breakdown of the dialectic of building the religious world: religious activity (externalization) soon declined as well as the acceptance of the world view as objectively real (objectification). The resulting lack of internalization led to an anomic state in which brethren began attending meetings of other churches. Because this dialectic encompasses the overall world-building process, without church organization as a base, the former could not continue. Witness Lee therefore sought to revitalize church organization so that the dialectic between religious activity and the objective and subjective realities of the religious world view could continue.

His means of doing so was the use of a particular set of ideas to rebuild church organization so that it might function in order to meet certain goals. Like Franz Schurmann in Ideology and Organization in Communist China (1968,18), I consider this set of ideas as ideology, which serves "the purpose of creating and utilizing organization in order to reach certain goals:" in the case of the Local Church these goals being certain internal (unity) and external conversionist ones. Because of certain constraints placed on Witness Lee by the religious world view, this set of ideas had to take a form other than that of explicit oral or written formulations normally associated with ideology. This form was that of particular patterns of religious ritual during the church meetings. These ritual changes which took

place after the split soon served as the tie between each stage in the world-building dialectic. There was no longer a gap between world view and religious activity and experience. Because the existence of church organization not only provides a base for this dialectic but is dependent itself for survival on the latter's continuance, ritual thus serves as ideology expressed on a symbolic level.

The conversionist goals of the Local Church imply a close connection between its view of the way the world IS and the way it SHOULD BE. Particular strategies for reaching the latter are based on perception of the former. For Witness Lee, the maintenance of the religious dialectic is complicated by the fact that in Taiwan the Local Church has no monopoly on presentation of world view and corresponding plausibility structure. Moreover, group and individual experience must reinforce the trend toward eventual domination by the church/spirit. Because the pluralistic situation offers a number of competing plausibility structures, Witness Lee must rely on conscious social engineering in order to maintain the reality of the Local Church's religious world (suggested by Berger, 1969,50). His introduction of new ritual patterns as well as other aspects of his leadership provide examples of such social engineering.

Because of the close interrelationship among the various aspects of the aforementioned dialectic and between that dialectic

and its plausibility structure, there are no stringent requirements on the order for presenting each of these features. Thus, I have found that after presenting an outline of church history (Chapter II), the smoothest transition is from a discussion of church organization (Chapter III) to that of its world view (Chapter IV) and activities (Chapter V), moving subsequently to an analysis of the forms of internalization, which I describe as similar to those of thought reform in mainland China today (Chapter VI). In the final chapter, I will reexamine features of the split in light of the original hypothesis that the breakdown in the dialectic of religious world-building was, in the case of the Local Church, corrected by Witness Lee's use of ideology in the form of ritual.

To support this conclusion, I refer to data obtained primarily through participant-observation in the church from September 1971 until December 1972, conducted by myself and my assistant, Miss Alison Chang.¹ While the focus of the field research was on one of the fourteen Assembly Halls of the Taipei Local Church, I also visited other Assembly Halls in both Taipei and Taichung and spoke with "brethren" from churches at other parts of the island. In those cases in which brethren provided me in conversations with particular information, I have designated the reference with "p.i." (personal interview). In addition, I have used various publications--tracts, hymnals, and journals--purchased from

the church book store in Taipei. Other written materials have also served to supplement the information acquired on church history and organization (Coak, 1968; Wilson, 1967; Swanson, 1970; Lu, 1973). Finally, my theoretical conclusions are based for the most part on works by Schurmann (1968), Berger (1969), Wilson (1967, 1970), and Lifton (1961; his treatment of thought reform is discussed in Chapter VI).

Many thoughtful readers will find throughout this dissertation various features in church practices and beliefs comparable to those in traditional Chinese religion. Useful sources for such comparison range from the vast amounts of data provided by Dore (1966) and De Groot (1969) to the most recent accounts by Jordan (1972), Ahern (1973), Wolf, ed. (1974), and Baity (1975). I have chosen not to examine these issues here not only because of the length required to cover their complexity but also because of the difficulty I encountered in collecting data on early church history and the background of past and present church leaders and members. Without such information, I considered linkages between church doctrine, organization and practices with those of traditional Chinese religion merely speculative. However, in the Afterword I do suggest that the information in the main body of this dissertation may contribute to the understanding of some aspects of political behavior on the Chinese mainland.

Gaining access to information essential to a portrait of the Taipei Local Church was complicated by various restrictions placed on the methods I was permitted to use for my research. As later will become clear, the group's perception of life within the local church was inconsistent with the overall goal of my inquiry, which was to describe and interpret in rational terms the beliefs, behavior and backgrounds of the brethren in the context of church organization. Because all activities within the church are seen as being directed by the force of Jesus' spirit, any attempt to use the rational mind to interpret experience or to order one's world for the purpose of making decisions is summarily dismissed as straying from this ultimate spiritual control. Thus, my efforts to garner information regarding the background and status of the church brethren (i.e., census of the group) were thwarted. The brethren saw these efforts as conflicting with the church ideal that within the church, unlike the outside world, members are answerable only to Jesus. Jesus, in turn, is viewed as directing the members (through revelations) into a spontaneous and natural exposition of those features of their lives that are undergoing change. Once in the church, other brethren are discouraged from prying directly into facets of each other's lives; eventually, new members will be "moved" by the spirit to evaluate their past and present situations in

the context of the group's world view. Thus, my use of a formal interview schedule to gain statistically significant data regarding the economic and social status of members in the Local Church was rejected by church leaders. In addition, the urban life style, in which most members worked or went to school during the day rendered impossible the more natural process of casually meeting members through residence in a limited fieldwork area.

Because of this, I had to rely for the most part on conversations and constant attendance of nightly church meetings where in testimonies the brethren revealed in bits and pieces various aspects of their personal lives. From this, I could gain an overall impression of the composition of the Local Church in Taipei as being comprised of mainlanders who had come to Taiwan after 1949; in addition, the majority of active members (brothers) held positions in the government bureaucracy or the army (or had retired from either). The rest were in business and various sundry occupations. This general impression of membership in the Taipei Local Church was substantiated at the conclusion of my study when I gained access to a partial list of brothers at the Eighth Assembly Hall (where I conducted most of my research).³ Moreover, brethren who had attended meetings in Taichung (central Taiwan) Taitung (southeastern Taiwan) described the makeup of these churches as being similar in general terms noted above to that of the Taipei Local Church. With this thumbnail sketch

as an intellectual framework, I should now like to begin by providing the reader with an emotional context for my portrait of the Taipei Local Church.

A Glimpse

The day is December 30th. This past week has been one of high emotional excitement in Taipei's Local Church for on the first of January there is to be a march to spread the gospel. As I walk down Lane 113 of Hsiameng Street, I can hear singing.

I can still remember the reactions of some Chinese acquaintances who live near the church upon hearing of my plans to study the group. "Madmen! They need to be studied and helped." "Our next door neighbor has to take sleeping pills because he is bothered so much by the noise every night."

As I approach the building from where singing is coming, the setting does not seem similar to other Christian church surroundings in Taiwan where large church structures often dominate residential areas. Here on the walls are painted large red characters, in the manner used in Taiwan to express political slogans. These boldly proclaim: Jesus Christ came into the World to save sinners (基督耶穌降世為要拯救罪人) and God loves man (神愛世人). Over the gate, a sign invites guests to "please come hear the gospel (請來聽福音)". At the gate I am greeted by a church brother and sister who upon seeing me exclaim "Hallelujah!"

I answer "Ni hau ma?"⁴ (How are you?), aware that the brethren themselves would answer "Amen." Entering through the portals, I am struck by the simplicity of the buildings. Bright-colored flowers and foliage of all types crowd a garden at the entrance. To the left and in front of the garden area are two other smaller wooden buildings. In one, students are gathering to discuss the plans for the march. In the front building, men and women are checking over cards with members' names, addresses and photographs. From a back room, voices of a few brothers can be clearly heard in prayer, beseeching Jesus to give them strength to ensure the success of His Christian army which will soon embark on a mission to spread the gospel to the outside world.

At the entry of the main Assembly Hall stands a man wearing a badge ("Host") who shows me to my seat on the right. To the left is the women's section; men and women are separated during prayer meetings. At the front I see that new letters ("Jesus is Lord") made from wood have been placed on the wall. Their red hue stands out against the white walls, freshly painted for the New Year (a process normally done by Chinese during their own New Year in February). The close atmosphere is accented by the seating arrangement: two sections each of men and women separated by an aisle face each other and a central area, where hymns are led and testimonies given. This provides easy access

to the microphones, sometimes placed on both the men's and women's sides, at other times only on the men's side. About twenty college students (now on vacation from school) are present. The female students all move to sit together, opposite and to my left. Suddenly, prayer begins.

At first these prayers seem incoherent to the outsider for everyone is shouting at once. Soon, however, individuals begin to shout singly in a rhythmic pattern and while swaying from side to side, the brothers and sisters answer AMEN to each proclamation. "Praise the Lord!" AMEN "Be with us tonight!" AMEN "We have no strength without you!" AMEN. As the prayers subside, a brother rises and begins to lead a hymn. With a piano as our guide, we start by merely singing "do, re, mi"--represented in our hymnals by the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. After feeling comfortable with the melody, we sing the words. The man who leads the hymn (for only men take part in LEADING the services) asks first for the brothers alone to sing, followed afterwards by the sisters. As he sits down, small groups of people sitting together rise and sing, and the atmosphere becomes one of spontaneity. Students rise and sing while the adults clap their hands to the rhythm. Groups of adults follow suit and the meeting becomes one of free expression through song. After about ten minutes, the brothers and sisters begin to pray, shouting the verses of the hymn to call to the Lord.

A person shouts a verse, and others follow with AMEN. As the prayers die out, someone yells out the number of another hymn and the process begins again. In church all are told that we must be like children, innocent and freely expressive. We therefore begin to sing a hymn with hand movements often taught to children. The older brethren are slower to rise and sing this hymn but after a while they too lose their inhibitions and their hands and voices proclaim that "we have changed, we are joyful, we praise the Lord."

A deacon of the church now rises and tells us that during the service that culminates the march on Saturday, the brethren should give short testimonies: "Before I believed in Jesus, I smoked cigarettes; now I don't." "Before I accepted Jesus I was a dead man; now I am alive!" Brother Jou, an elder of the Taipei Church, rises to remind us that this time we are not preaching for only the Eighth Assembly Hall on Hsiameng Street but for all of Taipei. Shortly after he finishes, we return to singing one of the previously sung hymns: The Merciful Lord is Coming (free translation):

Jesus is our lovely groom, we are all his bride
We have already decided to turn our sight to him,
never turn our eyes away from him.
The future is in front of us, put our burdens behind
us. Go forward quickly.
The merciful Lord is coming, we must run fast; we
will meet him soon. (Assembly Hall, #119)

After singing the hymn, a girl rises and begins to give her testimony:

The other day I met a person (sex unspecified)⁵ who made me angry and I decided that I didn't like them. I knew that I should think of the Lord but was so angry I couldn't think straight. Later I was reminded of REVELATIONS 3:8: "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast little strength and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name." I know my behavior was bad but I just couldn't love that person.⁶

Taking a cue from the previously sung hymn, several of the brethren rise and speak of the burdens which they too have shed:

There was a contest recently and I had a great desire to receive the prize. This desire became a burden to me. When I returned home and thought of the Lord, I realized that I did not need this prize and I rid myself of my burden.

At this, a deacon of the church runs into the center aisle with a bundle on his back. He throws this bundle out of the building and proclaims: "Now I have rid myself of this burden and we must do the same with our problems." In this way the meeting takes on the form of a feverish conversation. The theme has been set by the hymn and individuals rise and discuss their recent feelings usually in the context of this theme (see Chapter VI). Their views are confirmed and they are encouraged to continue by the answering AMENS of their brethren.

Finally the elder rises and says that as this year ends and a new one begins, we shall soon forget those incidents which are unrelated to the Lord; however, those things we have

done for the church will always be remembered. It is already past nine. Prayers begin and although the form is the same as at the beginning of the service, the content refers to the messages in the hymns and testimonies: "Release us of our burdens!" "We have changed and are now happy!" "Give us strength to preach your gospel!" A deacon now rises to tell us of the schedule for the next several days of preaching. I suddenly see something burning outside. A brother who is caretaker of the church is burning a box covered with a red cloth. As we walk outside, the elder explains to me that they are burning "dirty" items--Buddhist idols, calendars with pictures of movie stars, dragons on the red cloth. All of these items have been brought by the church members to be burned. As the New Year begins, we must purge ourselves of the bad and leave ourselves pure to begin the New Year. A Chinese friend whom I have brought to give me his impressions of the group stands subdued as the elder explains that the dragons represent the serpent in the Bible and if such symbols exist in one's house, misfortune in the form of sickness and family quarrels will often occur. "This is scientific and not a superstition. Many brothers and sisters have experienced changes in their home atmosphere once wall hangings such as this one (with dragons) have been destroyed. The spirit of Jesus cannot exist

in an individual and home as long as satanic spirits are present. Once the latter are destroyed, the spirit of the Lord can reign and protect us from further incursions of ghosts and Satan!"

As I walk out among exuberant smiles and enthusiastic AMENS, I pass through the gate of the church into the streets of Taipei. I have passed the threshold into a secular city of more than one and a half million people. The streets are bustling with people shopping, hawkers selling food, children playing in the streets, taxis and buses challenging each other at intersections. After a few moment, the spirit of Jesus is lost to me and the realities of a city of 1.8 million startle me out of my sacred mood.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹I have since become aware that a study of the Local Church was later conducted by a group from the Academia Sinica in Taipei. Professor Wolfram Eberhard, who attended a meeting in 1974 where a preliminary report of this study was presented, has given me a copy, which includes an outline of the study as well as some data collected from questionnaires given to brethren (sample size 30). At the time of writing this dissertation, the full study had not been published, but apparently, from what I have seen, the group has selected a different approach.

²Throughout this dissertation, the term "brethren" refers to both men and women; otherwise, "brother" or "sister" will specify the gender of a member.

³The last week of my stay, I was allowed to take a rather limited look at the church rolls for brothers of the Eighth Assembly Hall only. A young church leader described to me the province from which each came and their general occupations. The categories into which occupations were divided were bureaucrat (working for government agency); business; military; other; and unknown. It was unfortunate that I was not allowed to examine these records more fully so that the accuracy of my informant's answers could be verified. Because of the time allotted, I could only depend on his own categorization of these names; moreover, there was a large percentage of brothers whose occupations he did not know. My own experience in the church suggested that the great majority of brothers were in the army or were bureaucrats. The figures below present a discrepancy regarding occupation (although the mainlander/Taiwanese division is supported):

Sample size: 270

Mainlanders=226

Taiwanese= 44

Occupation

Bureaucrats-73

Businessmen-63

Military-25

Other-36

Unknown-73

Two reasons might account for this discrepancy with my own observations. First, if the figure for businessmen is correct,

this merely denotes that they were baptized. For the most part, businessmen do not have the time or interest to be active in church organization. Two-thirds of them were described as seldom, if ever, attending, and of those that do, many are retired. Second, these figures represent the present occupation of brothers and in many cases retired military or bureaucrats have later taken up forms of business. Because of my informant's desire to finish the process of looking at the rolls quickly, this latter could not be checked.

⁴I will be using the Yale system for English transcription of Mandarin Chinese words, except in the case of place, street and some personal names already commonly known by another system of English transcription.

⁵In spoken Chinese, the third person pronouns denote no gender. In this case, it was suggested by my assistant that the sister's vagueness and manner in refusing to identify the other person pointed to the latter's being a male. Because of discretion in contact between sexes within the church, the testimony provided an emotional outlet while preserving the necessary anonymity.

⁶The testimonies have been translated into colloquial English either from notes taken by me during meetings or from transcriptions of tapes by my assistant, Miss Chang.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH HISTORY

In recounting the history of the Local Church (known officially as the Assembly Hall Church), I have divided it into four periods: birth of the church; development of church organization; decline on the Chinese mainland; and finally, development in Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and the United States. Obtaining information regarding the history was one of the most formidable tasks that faced me during my research. The reasons for this difficulty differed with regard to information about events on mainland China and those in Taiwan. Generally, within the church there seems to be very little oral tradition as people do not speak freely about historical events. Of those that were willing to discuss the church's history with me, many of them were unfamiliar with past events on the mainland as they had joined the church only after coming to Taiwan. Most of them were limited to information later available to me: A Summary of Church Truth (n.d.), a general outline of church history; a book by Watchman Nee's nephew (criticized because the author was not a church member); and bits and pieces that have been published in church periodicals. As for those who had knowledge of past events, one informant suggested that the

reluctance of Lee and other leaders to discuss them was due to their close association with the successes of church growth. Any discussion of their personal past histories would contradict the image of the leaders' humility.

With regard to information on the church's development in Taiwan, access to such as hindered by the split which occurred in church ranks in 1966. It was only at a special meeting held in Taipei in February of 1972 that Witness Lee discussed with the younger brethren at some length the development of the church, including recent events in Taiwan. The primary reason is related to the role history plays in church life. Past events gain importance in the context of the present church situation and must be interpreted (revised?) in order to give credence and justification to present church circumstances. Because of the bitter split, there has been disagreement between Lee and those who left the church regarding the aims and interpretations of the church's founder, Watchman Nee. Both groups consider themselves the legitimate heir to his initial direction. Hence, individuals placed emphases on different features of early church growth as a way of justifying their present positions.

In light of this use of history, I can only speculate about why Lee decided to reveal historical events in February of 1972. First, it may be said that the church has not only recovered but prospered since the split of 1966. A solid organizational

base has been established not only in Taiwan but in Southeast Asia and the United States. The groups which broke with Lee have not had the same success. Thus, Lee can discuss these events with the confidence that the present justifies his past position. In addition to the splinter group, Lee spent several meetings attacking a small group in Taiwan which immediately after the split had drawn many brethren away from Lee's church. Moreover, the church has the same organizational basis as the Local Church (i.e., locality; see Chapter IV) and even refers to itself as the Taipei Church, Taichung Church, etc. As the young brethren come into contact with names, places, and doctrines which have a ring of familiarity, it was important that Lee clarify certain boundaries for them.

What Lee did not dwell on at this time also serves to substantiate the notion that resolution of past conflicts are used in the church to justify one's position. While the dispute has stabilized on Taiwan, it is just now reaching a feverish pitch in Hong Kong where physical confrontation between opposing sides has occurred. With the outcome unclear (the dispute has been taken to the courts; see Chapter VII), discussion of these events publicly might damage the church's present image of itself as the earthly manifestation of the unity and harmony of Christ's body. No doubt once the situation in Hong Kong is resolved,

the result will be used as exemplifying the correctness of Lee's position.

My first breakthroughs in gathering historical information came from brethren who had left the Local Church. With the information supplied by them, I would approach Local Church brethren (usually at the Eighth Assembly Hall) for confirmation (or correction) of the material. In this way I was able to obtain specific information on the church's history, albeit often clothed in terms that justified the position of one group or the other.

Several written sources refer to the life of the church's founder Watchman Nee (Chan, 1972) or to the overall development of Christianity in China (Jones, 1962; Kinnear, 1972; Rees, 1959; Swanson, 1970). The church itself has published some accounts that reflect its history as has the splinter group and others (Shr, et. al., 1970; Lu, 1973) and Witness Lee himself (1970). Even though there may be some discrepancy in dates among these sources, I was able to get a clear if not detailed sequence of events in the church history in China and Taiwan.

Birth of the Church

Information regarding the background of the church's founder, Watchman Nee, comes primarily from Chan's biography and interviews with three informants who knew Nee on the mainland (and who

asked to remain anonymous). Nee was the third child and first son of a Fuchou customs house official whose parents had been Christians. His mother had never been baptized and was troubled by the fact that the relatives complained about her having no son. It is related that she prayed that if God would give her a son, she would contribute that son to God and let him serve God during his lifetime. The next year she gave birth to Watchman.

Nee was educated by a tutor hired by his father and taught classical literature and poetry. He entered an Anglican high school in Fuchou. During this time (1922) a Chinese evangelist, Doris Yu (Yu Tsz Du; 余慈度) came to lead a revival meeting. Shortly afterwards, both Nee and his mother were baptized. The next stage in Nee's theological development was his contact with an English missionary, Margaret Barbour (何守恩; He Shou En). The only information available on Miss Barbour was the fact that she had experience with the Brethren movement in England and the China Inland Mission, had broken with both, and had returned to the Fuchou area to live. Nee was then attending Trinity College and because of the difficulty he was having with his biblical studies, he turned to Miss Barbour for help. While it is impossible to gauge the extent of her influence on Nee, all references imply that it was great.

Soon afterward, Nee and several other Chinese (王載 , Wang Dzai; 王峙 , John Wang; 王連俊 , Wang Lyan Jing; 陸忠信 , Lu Jung Syin) began meeting and continued doing so until about 1924 (Lee, 1972) when they split on the issue of a professional ministry, which Nee opposed. Nee then began to publish the Christian News (基督徒報 , Ji Du Tu Bau), which lasted through twenty-four issues. By the end of 1925, according to Lee, Nee suspended publication and went to Shanghai and Nanking to evangelize. In Nanking he spent about nine months as secretary to Dr. Jya Yu Ming (賈玉銘), a well-known Presbyterian theologian (Yu, p. 1., 1/10/75). Nee later disagreed with Dr. Jya about certain doctrines and left. By 1927, he had settled in Shanghai and it was there that he began regular meetings and from there that the church would spread.

In Shanghai, Nee and several other brothers and sisters rented a house and started regular meetings. An informant who was attending the theological seminary in Shanghai at this time described her first meeting:

On Sunday we all had the freedom to attend any service and once I went to the house rented by Nee. I had seen a sheet with subjects discussed by Nee and was curious to go. When I entered I discovered that there was not much room and no one was talking. There was no podium. We sang hymns and prayed and soon Nee came down from upstairs and there was a feeling that he had come from amidst God, a feeling that I never had before. He stood on a small low table and spoke--every sentence

was worth remembering. It was fresh talk. Many of the Old Testament predictions that we had learned in seminary became clear when he spoke. After he talked he would sometimes decide that a subject needed to be more closely studied. My teacher at the seminary laughed at Nee and said that his road of only going by what was in the Bible was too narrow. But in my prayers I felt that if this road was that of the Lord, then let it be considered narrow. I also saw that the lives of Nee and his friends were different from other people around him; they were forthright and truthful. When we younger brothers and sisters made mistakes, we were told without consideration of face. (Personal communication)

In addition to her impression of Nee as a spiritual leader, the principal fact that stands out in her account is the pre-dominance of young people attending the meetings. This leads to speculation regarding the relationship between the development of Christianity at the time and the nationalistic ferment in China. One source (Kinnear, 1972, 81) noted that Nee's mother had previously been a revolutionary agitator for Sun Yat-sen. Others (Baehr, p.i.) spoke of Nee as being ultra-national in this early period. After his decision to lead his own church, Nee apparently called for Chinese Christian believers to break away from foreign influence (Lu, 1/73, 37). Generally speaking, at this time in China young people were searching for an answer to China's humiliation at the hands of the Western powers and Japan. While some turned to the ideas expressed by Sun Yat-sen in his Three People's Principles and others to Marxism, a small

minority saw in Christianity the potential for rejuvenating China and filling the moral gap caused by the failure of the Confucian ethic. They suggested that religion, in giving comfort to the distressed, is both inevitable and useful; moreover, many viewed Christianity as the embodiment of socialist principles and even as the "gospel of the poor." (Chow, 1964, 326)

The Christian alternative was handicapped by an antagonism toward foreign religious organizations (Latourette, pp. 694-699). In reviewing the index for the years 1890-1920 of the Chinese Recorder, a periodical published in Shanghai which served as a source of communication for missionaries in China, I found that the only references to the concept of independent or indigenous Chinese churches were suggestions for turning over organizational and financial responsibilities of existing groups to native Chinese. Many young people had no desire to attach themselves directly to foreign churches, seen as representatives of governments attempting to thwart Chinese nationalistic fervor (Latourette, pp. 812-813). Thus, in Nee's case, at the outset of his endeavors, many of those who began to attend his meetings were from other denominations. Two informants who were on the mainland at the time referred to the antagonistic attitude of missionaries toward Nee, who was seen to be "stealing their sheep." All of this information suggests that growth of the Assembly Hall Church and other indigenous Christian churches such as the True Jesus

Church and the Jesus Family (Rees, 1959) must be considered in light of Chinese nationalism. By 1949, indigenous churches included about 25 percent of all Protestants, and the Assembly Hall Church (second in size only to the True Jesus Church) had more than 700 churches with a membership of over 70,000 (Jones, 17).

Development of Church Organization

Watchman Nee's main point of communication with other Christians was through his own evangelical work and the publication of a journal, Restoration Newspaper (復興報 ; Fu Sying Bau). Through the newspaper, he stimulated others to form churches which usually began without direct contact with Nee. By 1928, his working center had been completely transferred to Shanghai.

Late in the fall of 1928 a special meeting was held in Shanghai, attended by Christians from the north of China. From this meeting Nee was offered an invitation to Yentai in Shantung province where he met Lee Chang Shou (Witness Lee). Lee was apparently impressed with Nee and began working with him to set up meeting places in northern China so that the centers of the work were now both Shanghai and Yentai. Nee sought to train workers in the church by traveling throughout China; Lee's prime responsibility was the spreading of the gospel in Shantung and later in northeast China. (This information was given by a sister who belonged to the faction that had broken away from Lee on Taiwan; she

described Lee as merely one of the many co-workers of Nee and if this is indeed true it might serve as some explanation for the lack of detailed information within the present-day Local Church regarding its early history.)

Initially, Nee's idea was merely to have gathering places in each location for the purpose of reading and studying the Bible for, according to one informant at the time, there was little Bible study among the denominations. There was no systematic organization of the churches in the early years. Not until 1933-1934 were there any positions such as elders and deacons in the Shanghai Church while in the north, the various co-workers took charge of church meetings. In 1933, Nee first traveled to Great Britain where he came into contact with Norman Baker of the China Inland Mission, various members of Exclusive Brethren, and T. Austin-Sparks, a Baptist minister who had fellowship with a group at Honor Oak. Here, influenced by Darby's writings, Nee became aware of the need for a more explicit church organization. On his return to China after a second trip to England in 1938, he wrote Concerning Our Missions (1939; has since been retitled The Normal Christian Church Life), which stated the prerequisites for church organization on the basis of scripture. The church had taken on the name of Jyau Hwei Jyu Hwei Chyu (教會聚會處 ; Christian Meeting Place) although it was known to other Christians as the Little Flock. This

was due to the use of a hymnal, Syau Chwan Shr Ger (小羣詩歌 ; Little Flock Hymnal) taken from that of the Exclusive Brethren. Later on Taiwan its official name for government registration was changed to Jyau Hwei Jyu Hwei Swo (教會聚會所 ; Assembly Hall Church) because another church in Taiwan had prior claim to its old title. In future I shall refer to the church as either Assembly Hall Church or Local Church.

In evaluating influences on church organization and ideology, the one aspect informants and published sources continually raise is the contact that Nee had with members and ex-members of the Brethren movement in England. The Exclusive Brethren movement was founded by J. N. Darby in Dublin in 1827 (Wilson, 1967, p. 287). Nee's earliest contact with a foreign missionary was that with Miss Barbour, who herself had been a part of the Brethren movement. Baehr (p.i., 1972) made reference to Nee's contact in Shanghai with James Taylor of the Exclusive Brethren movement as well as with members of the Raven group (an offshoot of the Brethren movement). Another source (Lu, 1/16/73, 38) stated that in 1932 the Exclusive Brethren sent seven members from Australia, England, and the United States to Shanghai where they visited Nee and invited him to come to Europe. Most interestingly, one informant stated that after Nee's 1933 visit to England, he received some funds from the Exclusive Brethren for his church work. Although unable to

locate them, I was given assurance that secret accounts of church funds have been published; they had previously been kept secret in order to prevent the government from gaining access to information that could be used for the purpose of taxation. (Yu, p.i., 1975)

Two reasons have been suggested for Nee's break with the Brethren. The first was that because of Nee's nationalistic feelings, he refused to recognize his church as part of the Brethren movement (Lu, 1/16/73, 38). Secondly, one informant noted that Nee liked to have fellowship with all spiritual people and that the closed nature of the Brethren movement, whose members could not have fellowship with anyone outside the group, was unacceptable to Nee. This latter conflict is reflected in a comment by the Exclusive Brethren after Nee visited other church meetings in England:

In this connexion we feel sorrowfully obliged to refer to a lack of uprightness which has marked Mr. Nee, particularly in some of his movements, while amongst us. (Coad, 1968, 211)

One of these other meetings attended by Nee was that of T. Austin-Sparks who led the Christian Fellowship Center at Honor Oak in London. Nee and Sparks became friends and Nee began to think of Sparks' group as his "brother church" (Lu, 1/16/73, 38). In addition to these connections of Nee and perhaps more important for evaluating present-day church

organization and ideology, Witness Lee came into the Assembly Hall Church in 1927 from the Newton Brethren in Shantung (A Summary of Church Truth, n.d., p. 19). Darby was one of the few "other Christians" about whom I heard Lee speak favorably. Lee's changes in wording of the Chinese Bible were made with reference to Darby and the latter's complete works were found in the library of the First Assembly Hall in Taipei.

Because of the obvious influence that the Brethren movement had on Nee and Lee, I should like to turn to some of the features of the latter movement which are also characteristic of the Assembly Hall Church. I rely primarily on Wilson's discussion of the Exclusive Brethren (Wilson, 1967). The aspects of the Assembly Hall Church also found in the Brethren movement include the division into independent local churches, each church maintaining its independence while continuing to have contact with other local churches; a lack of a professional ministry; and close identification with the brethren in one's local fellowship (see Chapter IV for further discussion of these elements in Assembly Hall Church organization). Moreover, Wilson sees the importance placed on the Holy Spirit as marking off the Brethren from other Christian groups (Wilson, 1967, p. 313); the fact that only among the Brethren can the Holy Spirit act is reminiscent of the way in which the Assembly Hall brethren view their relationship to the Holy Spirit (see Chapter III). The two groups

also share the expectation that the truth will be progressively "opened up" and that insight evolves into truth. This special relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church forms the basis for understanding change in Assembly Hall Church activities and ritual today. The brethren hold that the Holy Spirit must direct all activities of the church body and of the individuals who comprise it. The truth revealed from this Spirit will thus be manifested in the reality of the church body, which is considered to be the earthly manifestation of Jesus' spirit. Because this truth is continuously being "opened up," changes will take place in church life.

Decline on the Mainland

During the Japanese occupation of China, the Local Church refused to buckle under to Japanese demands that all Christian churches be unified. The lack of a central organizational structure worked to the group's advantage for there was no way for the Japanese to issue orders through a central command to control the activities of all the various local churches in China. In some cases, those who were forced to migrate moved as brethren to areas not so completely under Japanese control and there established new churches. One informant mentioned that the church maintained itself in Manchuria during the war

untouched by attempts at Japanese control. Lee himself noted that "during these years the work in the north developed greatly." (Lee, 1972) One of his co-workers informed me that the Japanese had imprisoned Lee because of his refusal to unify all the churches; after he was released, Lee fell ill and was sent to recuperate. Lee himself did not mention the imprisonment.

Nee was apparently not closely involved in church activity during the Japanese occupation. Due to lack of funds, he had decided around 1940 to open a pharmacy in Shanghai (Sheng Hwa Yau Chang, 生化藥廠) using money collected from the brethren. Despite his hiring of brethren to work within the factory, many members attacked Nee for this non-spiritual activity and asked that he no longer lead their meetings in Shanghai. He did not participate with them in either communion or preaching (Yu, p.i.) but moved to Chungking where he spent his time writing until the end of the war. In 1946, he used profits from his firm to buy buildings in Fukien province for the training of church workers and in 1948 he was forgiven by the brethren and invited to become the church's leader (Lu, 1/16/73, 39).

After the defeat of the Japanese and the beginning of the Chinese civil war, the church still maintained its growth. When he became aware of the imminent Communist victory, Nee first went to Taiwan where he set up a pharmaceutical factory

and purchased land for the brothers and sisters (p.i.). Then he returned to the mainland to remain with the brethren but urged Witness Lee, who had a large family, to go to Taiwan. With regard to the fate of the mainland church after 1949, one informant who knew Nee well said that Nee had written a letter to Mao saying that members of his church had nothing to do with government; to this letter, the names of deacons and elders in China and on the Philippines were signed. This gave the communists access to information for controlling the church leaders. While the accuracy of this statement is not known, it might account for the great secrecy regarding church organization and membership in Taiwan today.

The only source which describes in detail the events which led to Nee's arrest as a series of three articles written in a Hong Kong magazine (Lu, 1973). In the second of these articles, the author gives a detailed description of those involved in investigating Nee and his church. Apparently, Nee was first arrested and then released in March 1950, at the time of the nationalization of his pharmaceutical firm. Later (in April 1952, according to Jones, 1962, p. 109) he was again arrested with two of his associates, most likely a result of a condemnation of the church during the Three-Self-Reform Movement (self-support; self-government; and self-propagation). As the Assembly

Hall Church was indigenous, the alleged attack against it was that "it shall abolish its women's meetings, its weekly breaking of bread, and its rule against women speaking in church." (Jones, 1962, 15) Nee's position as an entrepreneur also made him susceptible to attack during the period. In January of 1957, more action was taken against the church in Shanghai. The imprisoning of many of the leaders made it necessary to reorganize the church. The charges leveled against these brethren included

carrying on destructive activities, breaking down government policies and central movements, scattering reactionary words and counter-revolutionary rumors, instilling fear into the hearts of church members, poisoning the minds of youth and destroying the unity of the Christian church in opposing imperialism and in love for country and church. (Jones, 1967, 109)

According to the magazine article, in March of 1956 Nee's case was reanalyzed. The author, who attacked the individual in charge of the initial investigation, claimed that the reinvestigation took sixteen years and at the end Nee was forgiven. Nonetheless, he did not suggest that Nee had been forgiven before his death in Anhwei province in June 1972.

The thrust of these magazine articles is to defend Nee while at the same time attacking Witness Lee. It is this feature that makes them an interesting piece of evidence not only for the fate of the church on the mainland today but for the government's attitude toward the church. The author no doubt had access to Chinese government files because of the detailed

information regarding places, dates, and names of all those brethren and government officials involved in investigation of the church. Early church history was only utilized as a background to the main goal of the article (expressed in its title, "Church Hoax") to discredit the church today as well as its leader, Witness Lee. In the third article appears a detailed description of Lee's activities in developing churches in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the United States. The disruption in the church in Hong Kong (described in greater detail in the last chapter) led to the Chinese government's interest in the case. To gain support for his side, Lee apparently sent to Hong Kong a brother who was also a general of the 62nd Army in Taiwan (Lu, 3/16/73, 59). Because the British had promised the Chinese not to allow Hong Kong to become a base for anti-communist activity, the Chinese government sent a report to the Hong Kong government asking why Lee and others from Taiwan (all known anti-communists) had been allowed easy entry into Hong Kong. Moreover, the article suggested that the secret head of the church was Shen Jr Ywe (沈之岳), a brother at the First Assembly Hall who was also head of National Security in Taiwan (Lu, 59). In addition, a man arrested in Hong Kong as an employee of the Nationalist government's Central Intelligence unit had asked Lee to bail him out. Lee refused, according to the article,

because he did not want to reveal his anti-communist background. What the author of this article suggests is that the Chinese government considers the Assembly Hall Church to be more than merely a Christian denomination and to be a tool of the government on Taiwan. While I found no direct evidence to suggest that this is true, there is no doubt that the members are anti-communist and the building of churches in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong is certainly not detrimental to the interests of the Taiwan government. Church members and co-workers seem to have easy access to visas for leaving the island to do their work abroad. In fairness to the Local Church, however, I should add that while the church does have members who are high in government position, church affairs are considered separate from those of government, and these brethren are expected to serve the church family in the same way as do other church members.

Development on Taiwan

The first groups of mainland refugees belonging to the Assembly Hall Church began arriving in Taiwan in 1947. Lee said that in August of 1949 he had built a small assembly hall on Shanghai Road in Taipei and began meeting with a group of three hundred brethren. In three months, membership had increased to 1,000 (Lee, 1972). The success of the church in this early period

has been attributed to the fact of its members' early arrival from the mainland and so to their being able to provide a church home for mandarin speakers. There were few, if any, churches on Taiwan at the time where mandarin was spoken (Swanson, 191). Church growth in other urban areas of Taiwan was rapid: Kaohsiung (southwestern port city, 1948); Chilung (northernmost port, 1948); Taichung; Chiayi; and Hsinchu. For these last three my source gives no dates (An Outline of the Church, ca. 1954-1955).

The important events of this period were primarily directed toward evangelization and church growth. It is interesting that in the church's own outline of its history, the first time "local or place" church is mentioned occurs with reference to Taiwan. This gives some credence to the idea that the doctrinal importance of locality was emphasized by Witness Lee in developing the church on Taiwan. Moreover, during this period there were many meetings of church workers, who were initially being trained to build the church in Taiwan. An undated publication of the church, An Outline of the Training Course for Service, shows the importance placed on the ability of each co-worker to guide the brethren in spiritual growth (again a feature existing also in the Exclusive Brethren). In this publication, every aspect of church life is taken into consideration, with particular emphasis on the personal development of each co-worker in the realm of gospel preaching. Many aspects of public speaking

are touched upon: hammering away on the emphatic point, controlling the audience by tone, expression, gesture, and eye control, making each facet of the talk understandable, and speaking in a natural manner. All informants agree that the training process was closely directed by Lee himself, as Nee had done on the mainland when he criticized each co-worker's activities (Baehr, 1972). This early relationship between the younger workers and Lee was much like that between father and children; in fact, several of the younger brethren, later to split with Lee, had been brought to Taiwan from the mainland by him.

During this period there was much coherence and unity within the church, with the membership almost entirely made up of mainlanders who had recently arrived on the island. Lee also made several trips to the Philippines where he was able to secure donations for church growth in Taiwan. Evangelical efforts included the first gospel parades with torches. The only competition mentioned for this early period was between the Assembly Hall Church and the group which had its mainland name, Jyau Hwei Jyu Hwei Chyu. This other church, associated with the Open Brethren Movement, was led by Witness Lee's former business associate in Yentai, Shantung province. While in Yentai the two men became involved in these different Christian churches.

The relation of the breakdown in their business arrangement and church affiliation, while only speculative, is suggestive (Yu, p.i., 1975). In 1971-1972, I was not able to find any member of either group who would admit to any early ties between the two churches.

At the beginning of the church's growth in Taiwan in 1947, much importance was given to the publication of several journals known as Hwa Yu Jr Shr (話語職事 ; Ministry of the Word). In one such journal, now collated into a single blue volume, the significance of various facets of Christian worship was delineated. Subjects discussed included baptism, communion, authority, gospel preaching, proper relationship in marriage. This last subject may be related to the fact that many questions arose about the remarriage of brethren whose spouses remained on the mainland. It is difficult from these journals to recreate the nature of the church meetings during this period, yet from the emphasis given to preaching by the various co-workers, it seems likely that their role was much more formalized and the meetings far more structured than they are today.

In 1955, on the encouragement of a brother in the Philippines, Witness Lee invited the English evangelist T. Austin-Sparks to visit Taiwan. Despite the fact that the brethren generally discouraged contact with Christians outside the group, Lee knew

that Sparks and Watchman Nee had had close contact in the past and that Nee had thought highly of Sparks' spirituality. Sparks' first visit to Taiwan ran fairly smoothly with the topics of discussion revolving around spiritual revelation and the living of the spiritual life. Two years later, Sparks returned to Taiwan and a house was rented for him and his wife and a cook was provided for them.

This time Sparks dealt with the nature of serving within the church, an aspect directly related to church organization. He argued the need for greater communication among all Christians and that remaining only within the bounds of the Local Church is against the idea of the universality of Christ. Lee replied that if one doesn't have a glass, how can one put water into a receptacle, alluding to the need for strict boundaries in order for spiritual growth to take place. Sparks' answer was that Jesus (the water) should not be placed in a receptacle as small as a local church for Jesus is too big.

After various meetings, Lee attacked Sparks' position in meetings with elders and co-workers. He said he had made a mistake in inviting Sparks to Taiwan and that as a guest, Sparks had no right to criticize or suggest changes in the organization of the Assembly Hall Church in Taiwan. One informant present during a small meeting in which Lee criticized Sparks said that

he had been shocked by the harsh language used—that Lee had said that Sparks had a superiority complex and was unwilling to listen to others' viewpoints.

The disagreement can be viewed on two levels. In the first place, many of the younger co-workers, who previously had been skeptical of the level of spirituality of foreign Christians, were very impressed with Sparks and his scriptural knowledge. This engendered an interest on their part in reading Sparks' writings and discussing them among themselves. Implied in the statements of these informants regarding Lee's reactions is that Lee felt his position as sole head of the church threatened by Sparks. Thus, at one level, the clash was a personal one. At the second level, the important aspect of the "foundation" of the church (li chang, 立場) was at stake. Lee felt that the only scripturally prescribed basis for church organization was the locality and that all church workers should remain within the bounds of the Local Church. Sparks, however, felt that this doctrine was too dogmatic and had the effect of turning the principle of locality (which had been discussed by Nee) into a doctrine on which another sect or denomination was being formed, hindering the desired goal of universal fellowship among all Christians. Thus, he encouraged the co-workers within the various local churches to establish contact with other church

groups and to preach the gospel in meetings other than their own. Lee correctly saw this as a potential subversion of the organization of the Local Church as it existed in Taiwan. The result was that some of the co-workers and elders were sympathetic with Sparks' position and others maintained allegiance to Lee. The publication of Sparks' sermons in the Ministry of the Word in 1955 was halted and the stage was set for a struggle between the two factions which led to the formal split in 1966.

As a final note regarding Sparks, one informant mentioned that several years after Sparks' visit, Lee returned the favor and visited Honor Oak in England. He went to look at the weaknesses of the Honor Oak fellowship to find further evidence for his criticisms of Sparks' leadership. Lee apparently rekindled their rebellion with the eventual result that Sparks left the group. As I will be discussing in detail the events after 1957 in Chapter VII, suffice it to say at this point that Sparks' visit was a catalyst in bringing to the forefront problems that already existed within the Local Church. Afterwards, church activities were seriously disrupted. The disputes triggered events which led to the split. Membership dropped off sharply.

Today the church has not only recovered from the split but has doubled its membership from its highest point before the split. In addition, it has spread to more than eighteen cities in the United States, where new churches are established by

groups of brethren emigrating en masse from one location with an established church to another. How the group managed to recover is the topic of the next five chapters.

CHAPTER III

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

In the following discussion, the organization of the Local Church should be viewed as a manifestation of the church's world view which contrasts its own spiritual nature to the confusion both in other Christian churches and in the secular world surrounding the church (a detailed description of this world view is contained in Chapter IV). Moreover, as a plausibility structure for the dialectic described in Chapter I, the organization provides a framework within which the brethren can continue their world-building process by realizing their conversionist goals.

As noted before, many of the features of the Local Church organization that are described by Watchman Nee in The Normal Christian Church Life and by Witness Lee in his own publications closely resemble the organizational principles of the Exclusive Brethren. The rejection of a corporate name other than "church" (Wilson, 1967, 287) is subscribed to by the Local Church brethren. Their use of the name Assembly Hall Church is a result of a government requirement that all church groups be registered by an official name. They have diverged slightly from the Exclusive Brethren to the extent that they have some

formal organization (Wilson, 1967, 291). But in constituting an organizational structure, Nee sought to minimize its effect by strictly following prescriptions laid down in the New Testament and thus fitting the ideal of a spontaneous association directed only by God's will.

Moreover, the use of the term "organization" to describe how the church is organized must be qualified. The brethren use different terms for patterns of group relationships in outside society and those of their own group whose form is dictated by the authority of Jesus' spirit. In the church, man is not an authority but merely a mouthpiece of that authority (A Summary of Church Truth, n.d., 23). Members thus shy away from questions which are phrased regarding the makeup of church "organization" (dzu jr, 組織), the latter term connoting to them man-made structures in which there is error and uncertainty. In place of this term, "dzu jr," one young church leader suggested using the term, "ti syi" (體系), which he felt described a spiritual organization or body with eternal life. On the other hand, the characteristics of the church body are sanctioned in the scriptures as interpreted by Watchman Nee, the church founder (Nee, 1962) and further outlined in a non-dated church publication, A Summary of Church

Truth (n.d.). The latter distinguishes the two aspects of church organization as the Local Church and the Universal Church.

Local Church

The locality is considered to be the only scriptural ground on which church organization may be based. This is also true in the case of the Exclusive Brethren who considered all assembly meetings in any one civic center as constituting one church (Wilson, 1967, 299). The apostle Paul, in his epistle to various congregations, addresses the church (in the singular) at Antioch, the church at Jerusalem--both localities. When referring to larger geographical divisions such as the district of Galatia or the province of Macedonia, he refers to the churches (plural) there. He also attacked divisive tendencies within localities. Hence any foundation for church organization whether larger or smaller than a locality is considered by members of the Local Church to be non-scriptural.

This principle of locality was demonstrated in 1968 when the suburban cities of Shih Lin, Ching Mei and Pei Tou were incorporated into Taipei city; immediately, the local churches of these areas became Assembly Halls within the framework of the Taipei Local Church and their elders became those of Taipei. Thus, when referring to their church, the brethren speak of

belonging to Taipei Jyau Hwei (Taipei Church) while outsiders and other Christians (unfamiliar with the church classificatory system) refer to them by their official name of Jyau Hwei Jyu Hwei Swo (Assembly Hall Church), a name which categorizes the church as a particular sect or denomination. In contrast, the general name covering all the local churches used by the brethren is "Di Fang Jyau Hwei" (地方教會), or Place Church. This is in line with the principle that each place or locality is the only scriptural basis for division among Christians. (While the actual translation of "Di Fang Jyau Hwei" into English is "Place Church," I have used "Local Church" as the term which most nearly combines the literal translation and organization meaning of the Chinese.)

The principle of locality further provides justification for the Local Church's non-recognition and non-cooperation with other Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. Its members point to fission among Protestant churches on the basis of doctrinal differences as a factor which threatens the unity of fellowship among Christians. To Local Church brethren, all Christians of Taipei should be members of the Taipei Local Church; those of Los Angeles, of the Los Angeles Local Church.

With regard to the Catholic Church, the brethren view its highly structured authoritarian organization as contradicting

the scriptural ground of Paulian Christianity as set forth in the epistles. This organization, manifested in cathedrals and obscure ritual, was attacked by Witness Lee in a special meeting held with church members throughout Taiwan (2/12/72). When referring to the Catholic Church, he invoked the image of the harlot from Revelations 17. In the case of the Protestant denominations, their proliferation into many groups was seen as analogous to the role of concubines. The net effect is that the Local Church maintains an air of exclusiveness, rejecting any ecumenicalism among denominations while at the same time welcoming Christians of all groups to join in participating in the activities of any Local Church. With regard to this principle of locality, it should be pointed out that there is disagreement between the Local Church and the group that broke from it as to the emphasis that should be placed on "locality." The latter point to Lee's changing the title of Nee's original work from Concerning Our Missions to The Normal Christian Church Life as an attempt to turn the concept of locality into a doctrinal position. Lee has taken Nee's work at its word. The dissidents believe that Nee was never so strict as to limit contact with other Christians due to their not accepting the precept of locality.

The majority of brethren not involved in decision-making within the church have only a basic notion of church structure.

As will be developed later this vagueness about the organization plays a prime role in reinforcing the view of the church as being solely directed by the spirit of Jesus. Nonetheless, I was able to distinguish four organizational levels in the Taipei Local Church (other Local Churches in Taiwan have essentially the same organization.) Each level had associated personnel responsible for its activities. The first is the Local Church itself, which is the only recognized corporate unit, theoretically independent in the realm of decision-making and finance. Since the church owns property, it is required by law to register with the government as a corporation (財權法人). The elders (jang lau, 長老) of each Local Church compose the board of directors of the local Assembly Hall Church, the official name under which each Local Church is registered. The elders in Taipei numbered thirteen at the time of the study. Two were sick and inactive and only one was native Taiwanese (Hakka). Their occupations were as follows: three in business; four full-time workers for the church; one in the bureaucracy; and two unknown. The elders are in charge of the "overseeing and shepherding of the Local Church" (A Summary of Church Truth, n.d., 27). Translated into more concrete terms, the elder's responsibilities involve church building and administration, the former including physical housing for the church as well as gospel

preaching by which new members are recruited who are seen as providing sustenance to build the church body. Administration is primarily concerned with obtaining and distributing funds to the fourteen Assembly Halls which comprise the Taipei Local Church. The headquarters for the elders and for the Local Church itself is in the First Assembly Hall, made up of a one-story assembly hall and a five-storied building containing residence for church co-workers and guests, a church book store and library, and smaller meeting rooms. The elders usually meet weekly to discuss specific aspects of church life at the various assembly halls. Each elder usually concentrates on overseeing activities in one assembly hall, although in August 1971, it was decided that as representatives of the entire Local Church, they should vary their attendance among several assembly halls. The elders themselves divide their responsibilities, some in charge of general administration, others in charge of specific activities such as organizing gospel marches, changing the format for church meetings, or printing hymns and gospel tracts. The latter activity is an important one in the church which has its own publishing house, the Taiwan Gospel Publishers, on the first floor of the First Assembly Hall. The publication of Church News (regarding activities of local churches throughout Taiwan), hymns, a journal, Ministry of the Word (written for the most part by Witness Lee), and various publications in both

Chinese and English provides a necessary and controlled channel of communication among various local churches in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and North America.

Although the elders are theoretically equal, there is a recognized hierarchical order within the group. Decisions are not made by vote but rather by prayer in which all elders seek inspiration (ling gan, 靈感) or a feeling (gan jywe, 感覺) generated from communication with Jesus' spirit. Unable to attend elders' meetings, I was nonetheless continuously told that once an idea is initiated and brought before all the elders, decision on its enactment was left solely to spiritual direction. Only the final unified decision becomes manifested to the brethren. Truth is evaluated in terms of agreement; thus, the elder of Assembly Hall #8 noted that when all brothers say the same thing, this indicates truth whereas different opinions suggest confusion regarding the truth. Hence, unity of purpose revealed from the highest echelons of leadership is seen as requisite to the proper functioning of the church body.

The only prescribed qualifications for elders and for deacons and jya fu dze, who will be described below, are set forth in I Timothy 3:1-13 as moral precepts:

The saying is sure; If any one aspires to the office of bishop (elder to the Local Church brethren), he desires a noble task.² Now an (elder) must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher. ³No drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of

money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; ⁵for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; ⁷moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. ⁸Deacons likewise must be serious not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; ⁹they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And let them also be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons. ¹¹The women likewise must be serious, no clanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹²Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; ¹³for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The church elders are able brethren among the members of the Local Church who are confirmed at its founding by the church apostle, in the present case Witness Lee. As long as these moral precepts are maintained, the elder retains his position for life. Should he change his local residence, his authority is relinquished. (This is in theory, while in many cases elders have moved and have become elders in the church of their new residence.) The replacement or addition of elders is made through prayer consultation among the elders; the selection is subject only to the apostle's confirmation.

Below the Local Church, the next level of organization is the Assembly Hall. There are fourteen in Taipei, spread out among seventeen districts (chyu, 區) of the city. Analysis of their

location shows the original dependency for church growth on mainland immigrants. Of the seven districts without an Assembly Hall, five are in the oldest areas of Taipei which are approximately 95 percent Taiwanese in makeup. These districts are: Yen-p'ing (延平); Chien-ch'eng (建成); Ta-t'ung (大同); Lung-shan (龍山); Shuang-yuan (雙園).

Each Assembly Hall has a brother and sister who serve as deacons (jr shr, 執事). Accounting of the money collected and spent is the brother's responsibility while both the brother and sister are in charge of filing membership data cards at the Assembly Hall and at Local Church headquarters. The Assembly Halls are further subdivided into Jya (homes, 家), of which there were 70 in January 1972. Each of the brethren should belong to the jya nearest his residence. This is usually the case but not an absolute rule as an individual may prefer to participate in a more distant jya. One case was cited in which an individual switched jya because of a personal conflict with another brother. As an Assembly Hall grows, a new jya may be added, as one of the prime purposes of the jya is to allow easy access to communion which takes place on Sunday evenings in the neighborhood. Once a month the entire Assembly Hall membership meets together in the main hall for communion. Of the five jya meets, three are held in homes, one at the Assembly Hall, and the other in a

building owned by the church. This neighborhood quality of organization provides an efficient means for the jya fu dze (家負責) to visit and encourage continual attendance of individual church members. These jya fu dze are several brothers and sisters (number depending on the size of the jya) who are appointed by the elders to guide activities within the jya. Assembly Hall #8 is subdivided into five jya, each with a head jya fu dze (in all cases a brother) and several others, both male and female. Moreover, since the decision to promote mobility of the elders amongst Assembly Halls has been in effect, two jya fu dze have been given the responsibility of overseeing activities at the Assembly Hall level.

At the lowest level of church organization are the syau pai (小排), small home meetings. Each jya has several of these meetings, the number depending on the size of the jya. At one time, each syau pai had a leader (pai fu dze), but several years ago it was decided that each of the brethren should feel a responsibility for contributing to and setting the theme for the Tuesday night meetings as the spirit directed him. It is at these small meetings that individuals most often seek the advice and support of their fellow brethren. The division of the syau pai according to sex is a natural manifestation of the general Chinese tendency to discuss one's most personal

problems only with members of the same sex and approximate age. For this same reason the younger sisters have their own syau pai separate from the older, more conservative sisters. Since every activity in the church should take place in an atmosphere of spontaneity rather than one artificially imposed, this division is considered a prerequisite to spontaneous response of members. Thus, when I first attended a sisters' syau pai, very little informal discussion took place in my presence. On my second attempt, I was taken aside by a male co-worker and politely informed that "unlike in America," older Chinese cannot freely express themselves among members of the opposite sex. From that time, my only contact with sisters' syau pai and other activities was through my female assistant.

In summary, there is in the organizational network a chain of vertical communication from the level of individual member, whose problems and life are revealed most fully in the syau pai to that of the Local Church, whose elders are responsible for planning church activities to meet the needs of the entire church body.

Taipei Local Church-----Elders
Fourteen Assembly Halls-----Deacons
Seventy Jya-----Jya fu dze
Syau Pai

Universal Church

While each local church is theoretically independent, with ultimate authority in the hands of church elders, the church is organized to allow for the maintenance of spiritual unity and communication among church groups. This latter feature is expressed in the brethren's concept of a universal church. The office associated with the universal church is that of apostle. The work of the church at large is entrusted to him, He is ordained by God (Corinthians 12:28) and his authority is manifested in the results of his work (I Corinthians 9:1-2) and the supernatural power of God. He is thus accountable to no one but God (as will be seen in Chapter VII each of these qualities was used by Lee to justify his own position and attack that of the splinter group), and he has the right "...to reveal the truth, to decide on questions of doctrine, appoint officers in the churches, prescribe the order in the local churches, etc. His ministry is not for one locality but for all localities."

(A Summary of Church Truth, n.d., 28)

The church's first apostle was Watchman Nee; presently, there are two: Witness Lee and Jang Wu-Cheng. The former is the prime church leader who travels between the United States and the Far East overseeing church doctrine and organization. Jang Wu-Cheng, on the other hand, coordinates activities and

guides the churches in Taiwan. Theoretically, as in the case of the apostle Paul, the apostle Paul, the apostle can only exhort the churches through moral pressure rather than compel them to particular action. However, later we shall see from examining the organizational split that the realities of his power far outdistance a limitation to persuasion only.

As representatives of the apostle, the co-workers (tung-gung, 同工) are responsible for the spiritual development of the members. Each is sent out by the apostle and given a particular responsibility in a local church. In the case of Taipei, where there are many such co-workers, most are associated with a particular Assembly Hall. The co-workers throughout Taiwan meet regularly in Taipei, Taichung (central Taiwan) and Tainan (southern Taiwan). As full-time workers in the church responsible to the apostle, they serve as communication links between the elders of each local church and the apostle. Thus, while particular activities such as gospel marches may differ from one local church to another, church beliefs and rituals remain uniform throughout the island. As succinctly stated in A Summary of Church Truth, "only when you touch the local church are you able to touch the universal church." (Assembly Hall, "The Testimony and Ground of the Church," 9). Hence, while there is a theoretical division between the local church and universal

church, the organization and ideology of the Assembly Hall Church makes the boundaries indistinguishable to the brethren.

Witness Lee has written that some have mistakenly considered that this Local Church foundation was derived from the Exclusive Brethren (Hwa Yu Jr Shr, 12/68, 379-380). Lee corrects this notion by referring to the fact that Nee was aware of the chaotic condition of Brethren churches on his visits to Europe in 1933. There was little positive contact among the various churches and church boundaries were sometimes based on a street or neighborhood. Nee himself did not finally release the truth of the local church ground until after a meeting with co-workers on the subject in 1937.

Lee has summarized the relation between the Local Church and Universal Church as follows (Hwa Yu Jr Shr, 11/57, 2938-2942): all local churches taken together comprise the universal church, which is representative of Christ's Body. Each local church is a reduced model of the universal church. It represents the qualities of universal church in a particular place and thus there can be only one per place (locality). Finally, the local church provides a concrete form within which workers can build the universal church. One can reach the Universal Church only through work within the various local churches.

In prescribing locality as the ground for church organizational independence, Watchman Nee not only was seeking to prevent the

church apparatus from being controlled by one or several individuals; he was further suggesting that division along any lines other than locality--personal leadership, doctrine, race, social status--is scripturally insupportable. The blueprint for Local Church organization may thus be seen as an attempt to deal with the dilemma of a series of independent local churches and the need for an organizational basis for communication between church groups. The result must be a spiritually unified church for as the body of Christ is indivisible so must its earthly manifestation the Church, be indivisible.

Decision-making and Financing

A concrete example of the flow of communication at the Local Church level concerned a problem voiced to the co-worker at Assembly Hall #8 regarding several mothers' embarrassment at bringing their noisy and rambunctious children to church meetings. According to the elder, on a Friday morning, the key leaders in the Assembly Hall met to discuss the weak points of the previous week and to relay decisions made by the elders. These leaders included the elder, co-worker, the two jya fu dze in charge of Assembly Hall activities, and two sister jya fu dze. When this problem was introduced, one of the brethren present suggested providing toys to keep the small children occupied. Once the

co-worker offered that the children could play with the toys in her room, the decision was made. On the following Saturday morning, the idea was introduced to other jya fu dze (two brothers from each jya) and they ratified (in church terminology, said AMEN) the decision. Sunday morning before the regular meeting, the other Assembly Hall leaders were informed and they too said "Amen!" Finally, at the Monday night service meeting, all brethren were notified of the new facility (p.i., 10/19/72). Thus, through the close communication channels with individual brethren, a problem was relayed from the grass roots to where its solution could be found at the higher levels of implementation and the decision forwarded down through those same channels of communication. When this process was described, there was no suggestion that an idea advanced at the top could meet with refusal by the brethren. But through the process of seeking "Amen" at each level of organization, the participatory ideal of the church is reinforced. At the same time, correct procedure for implementing decisions is revealed. Thus, despite the existence of a network of authority where each level is responsible to the one above (similar to modern management as suggested by Elder Jou), the members perceive each position as reflecting a higher level of spirituality, with decisions being reached not through human rationale but rather through intense prayer and communication with Jesus' spirit. Hence, there is seldom

any thought of rejecting an idea once the decision reaches the stage of confirmation at grass-roots level.

In the same way that organizational decisions in the church are reached by spiritual means, the financial problems of the church are considered to be spiritual and a question of faith (A Summary of Church Truth, n.d., 29). In complying with this view, the church never directly solicits funds from any member; all donations are anonymous, placed in an envelope by the donor and in a large box set in front of the meeting halls on Thursdays and Sundays. The donor is requested to accompany his gift with specifications about how this money is to be spent, i.e., provision for church co-workers, local church expenditures, other local churches. This feature is also described by Wilson for the Exclusive Brethren. Because the Exclusives disdain any professional ministry, "assemblies normally take up a collection once a month for gifts to be sent to the leaders; these gifts are not exclusively for those who have administered to the assembly."

(Wilson, 1967, 323-324)

Each week a different jya has the responsibility of opening the box. As with all activities in the church, the two jya fu dze who open the box, first pray together. Once the box is opened, the funds are divided into several categories; gifts for particular activities in the church or assembly hall; gifts

to individuals; general use funds for the maintenance of each assembly hall; and most recently, a special fund for rebuilding the first assembly hall.

General use funds from each Assembly Hall are turned over to Local Church headquarters which then redistributes the funds among the various assembly halls to meet the latter's needs for maintenance. Each month the fourteen assembly halls require and collect approximately 100,000 N.T. (\$2,500 U.S.). Of this sum about 45 percent is distributed among the various full-time church co-workers who are remunerated on the basis of a point system (e.g., 5 points for an adult, 3 points for a child). The total points among the co-workers are added up and divided into this 45 percent of the month's general fund to calculate the monetary value of each point. In addition, the elders may decide to assist the co-workers in other ways such as emergency medical funds, partial stipends for rent in cases where the co-worker is required to live near an Assembly Hall.

Information regarding the means for distributing the funds was some of the most difficult to obtain. Until the conclusion of my fieldwork, my only information was the public statement posted outside the Assembly Hall each month. The technical aspects of distribution were reluctantly discussed. Thus, the existence of the point system for co-workers was not

generally known. When queried about payment to co-workers, most brethren replied that beneficent and anonymous contributions to each particular co-worker provided the necessary funds for the latter's existence. Unlike in denominational Christianity, the co-workers are not salaried, but rather they receive different amounts each month according to the brethren's appreciation of their spiritual guidance.

Because within the Local Church there is an emphasis on reliance upon God rather than on man, anonymity in gift-giving further reinforces the idea that it is a spiritual force that motivates the donor. It is also an important feature by which the brethren differentiate themselves from other churches. Knowledge of funds needed are communicated both in the monthly financial statement or for immediate purposes, in spiritual terms to the members, who are often asked to pray for a particular church activity or individual.

In the case of gifts to individuals, a co-worker or jya fu dze will often visit the recipient and they will then pray together, stressing that the money is from the Lord. No man may rise in church rank due to financial contribution. I was often told of an anonymous gift of one million N.T. (\$25,000 U.S.) made without specification of how it was to be used. A notice was placed in each Assembly Hall requesting the donor to make such a specification.

Summary

Thus, while the existence of hierarchy within the church cannot be denied, the brethren attempt to de-emphasize its importance by their contention that the machinations of this organizational hierarchy are a result of Jesus' direction only. Moreover, they accentuate the ideals of community, this being reflected in their use of the metaphor of the church as family, to be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. Any role division is seen as acceptable only if it is necessary to the proper functioning of the church family; in support of this idea, each of the above-mentioned major positions in the church is filled not by the process of human reasoning but rather by revelation through prayer by a scripturally designated group of individuals. Even in the case of an individual's making a voluntary decision to fill a position, such decisions are seen as being derived from a "feeling" given to him by Jesus. In church meetings no reference is made to organizational decisions as being made by elders, deacons, or full-time co-workers. When they are presented, these decisions are described as suggestions for an activity or cloaked in terms of a general theme; each member is then encouraged to contribute to the planning of the activity. With emphasis on spiritual control rather than on control by men, a sense of participation thus

overshadows the realities of a well-disciplined organization. Any reference to the church body as an "organization" in the ordinary sense of the term meets with instant disavowal.

What is perhaps more important from the viewpoint of the individual member is the feeling that he too may aspire to a position of authority and responsibility regardless of his position in outside society. Because of this knowledge, he can accept decisions made by more experienced leaders within the church (referred to as "chyan myan disyung," "at front brothers"). The emphasis on a sense of community rather than hierarchical structure, on spiritual versus rational control serves to support the world view that contrasts the Local Church with the other two worlds of denominational Christianity and secular society. Hence, the previous description of the makeup of church organization must be viewed in light of the qualities used by brethren in portraying their organization: harmony, unity, spontaneity, naturalness, and strength through absolute dependence on Jesus. These qualities provide the filter through which the realities of the hierarchy are blocked from perception or at the very least are colored in terms consistent with the group's world view to be discussed next.

CHAPTER IV

WORLD VIEW

Taipei, located in the north of Taiwan, is the country's largest city with a population around 1.8 million. As the island's capital, the city serves as political, cultural, and economic center for a country whose livelihood has come to depend on its supply of a relatively inexpensive and efficient labor force for local and multi-national manufacturers who export most of their product. Between 1964 and 1972, its population grew by 800,000, an increase accounted for in part by the annexation to city boundaries of several outlying suburban towns and countryside and in part by immigration. Migrants from the southern part of the island have flocked to Taipei attracted not only by the labor market but also by the excitement and sense of freedom by which urban life contrasts itself to the village environment.

While the Assembly Hall Church has halls throughout the city, I concentrated my own research at the Eighth Assembly Hall, located in the Kuting district. This district is in the southwest part of the city; its area consists of about 552 hectares. Its population was 180,339 in 1970 with mainlanders (those born on the mainland or whose fathers were born on the

mainland) and Taiwanese about equally divided (Bureau of Accounting and Statistics, 1971, 33-34). Outside appearance of residences attest to the heterogeneity of income of the population within the borders of the district. Dispersed throughout the district are markets, small restaurants and commercial establishments to supply the daily needs of the inhabitants. Recreational facilities including park areas are sparse. They constitute less than .05 percent of the area. Children can be seen playing in the less congested alleyways and streets. Young men frequent small pool and billiard halls. However, due to the convenience of Taipei's transportation system, Hsi Men Ting (the central business district of Taipei) is easily accessible from almost any place in the city. A ten to twenty minute bus ride for 2.5 National Taiwan Dollars (in 1971-1972 it was only 1.5) which is less than seven cents will take one to areas where one can browse through department stores or meet friends for coffee and the movies.

One of the main business areas in the Kuting district is Hsiamen Street. Famous for its shoe stores, Hsiamen Street is bordered on one side by Kuling Street which, in the area contiguous to Hsiamen Street, is characterized by its block of small stalls selling old books and paintings. At its other end, Hsiamen Street trails off into Shui-yuan Road, which runs along the

the Hsin-tien Creek, a tributary of the Tanshui River. Thus, with the exception of one main street, Ting Chou Street, which crosses Hsiamen Street, it is restricted by physical barriers at both ends. To its left and right, however, are capillaries of alleys and lanes which constitute the residential backbone of the commercial area. In the lanes, four and five-story apartment buildings may be juxtaposed to Japanese-style wooden houses. Wood and stone gates with broken glass cemented to their tops serve as a warning to prospective thieves. The lively atmosphere of Hsiamen Street is quietly contrasted by its lanes. On Lane 113, this solitude is broken by a loud stream of singing voices. The walls surrounding these voices are covered with red letters serving notice that beyond the gate is a world different from the one outside. The boisterousness is of a nature qualitatively different from that of secular life. Once through this gate, one is struck by a definite feeling of leaving for a moment the outside world of taxis, television, and tea houses.

In describing the brethren's world view, I have at the outset taken the members' own formulation on the makeup of the individual and discovered that this bears some resemblance to the boundaries of the church group. As the brethren explained to me the characteristics of their world, I would let them

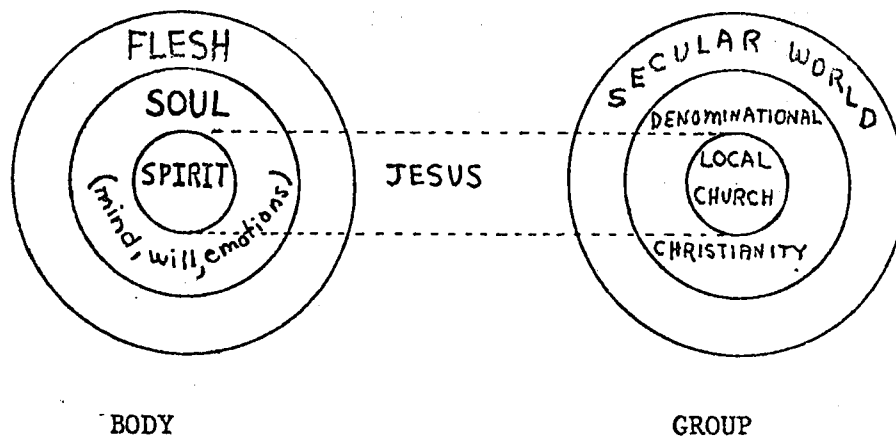
direct me into examining first-hand some of the characteristics described (such as the school system, psychological clinic, retired army organization). Thus, the information portraying the world view of the Taipei Local Church is an elaboration on perceptions and feelings revealed by the brethren in their testimonies and personal interviews.

Within the church meetings, testimonies allow the brethren to bring their experiences in the secular world into the context of church ideals and thus solidify the group's world view. As individual after individual proclaims the changes that have occurred in his life as a result of accepting Jesus, a general picture of the church view of daily life in Taipei is reproduced. What becomes important for my analysis of the organization and activities in the church is not so much the conditions in secular Taipei but rather the members' perception of these conditions and the means by which the church seeks to maintain these perceptions. For it is on the basis of these perceptions that the brethren interact with each other and those outside their group.

In their daily life, the Local Church brethren must learn to deal with the events in the secular and non-Christian world around them, the Christian world outside the church, and the bounded world of their own assembly hall. The testimonies assume

such a division and the need to cope with it; for even the most active members cannot fully reject the outside world. They believe that they must tame it and fit it to suit the goals of the church. The three realms that dominate their world view are secular Taipei, non-Local Church Christians, and the Local Church. Analogous to these three groups is the general perception of the makeup of the individual described to me by several of the church co-workers and noted by Witness Lee in a small church pamphlet (Lee, n.d.a.): FLESH (rou ti, 肉體); SOUL (hwun, 魂 ; composed of the mind, will, and emotions); and SPIRIT (ling, 靈).

Douglas has pointed out the parallel in structuring of group and individual body boundaries (Douglas, 1970). Here in the Local Church the concept rings true, for the boundaries of the group and the individual can be portrayed in two series of analogous concentric circles:



Before examining the analogous features of the two concentric circles, I shall consider the relation between the realms within each circle. In the makeup of the individual body, the spirit is at the core. This spirit in each individual must predominate over his soul by capturing the mind which has the potential of aligning itself with either the spirit or flesh. Once the mind is subservient to the spirit, the will and emotions soon follow; then the force of the spirit and soul can overcome the desires of the flesh. In the mapping of social boundaries, the Local Church is at the center. Its power emanates from Jesus' spirit and must overcome both the weaknesses of denominational Christianity and the temptations and frustrations of secular society. The brethren's general descriptions of the latter two realms directed my attention to their similarities with the characteristics of the soul and flesh. The major criticism leveled against denominational Christianity is its use of the mind and human rationale in both church meetings and doctrinal disputes. The mind (also the Soul of which it is a part) is seen as unable to overpower the forces of secular society (Flesh); thus, the chaos and dissension from the latter has filtered into the various Christian churches. The brethren view secular society as under the control of sin (Satan); this "sin" is characterized for the most part as disorder and

frustration, contrasting it to the order and harmony within the Local Church (Spirit).

With both series of circles viewed together, the prime goal within the church then is the victory of the SPIRIT and its earthly manifestation in the form of the church over the forces of the SOUL and FLESH, symbolized in denominational Christianity and the secular world. Often in the church one can hear the cry that "we are all of the same spirit." Thus, I see Jesus as providing the rod which ties together the two series of concentric circles. The church is the representative of His body on earth; the spirit of each individual should be filled with that of Jesus so that he and Jesus speak and act as one. Jesus, in serving as the unifying force between the individual and the group hence blurs the boundaries between the two.

Finally, I would like to clarify that the brethren's use of ling and hwun to designate spirit and soul should not be confused with the meaning of the term "ling hwun" (靈魂) in Chinese folk religion. In the latter case, ling hwun refers to an individual soul after death (for elaboration on variations in the concept of ling hwun, see Jordan, 1972, 31-40). In the Local Church parlance, an individual's ling represents that element which gives him immortality through the acceptance of Jesus as savior. When I asked about the makeup of non-Christians,

church members answered that they too have a ling but it is empty and functionless. The ling is given eternal life and function only through contact with Jesus' spirit. This confirms my contention that the individual, likewise, can only have an identity and function in the context of the group (in this case the church) which itself is the manifestation of Jesus' body. This will later become important in discussing the ramifications of the concept of freedom within the Local Church (see Chapter VI). The first task at hand, however, is a description of the three worlds which comprise the total reality with which the Local Church brethren must cope.

Secular World

The following is merely a sketch of the Local Church brethren's perceptions of life in the outside world. It is based on statements made by brethren in church meetings. The problems exposed in testimonies are varied and particular to the individual's life experiences. But combined they lead to an overall view of life in the secular world as being filled with conflicts, frustrations and often boredom. The outside world is portrayed as possessing dangerous forces which draw mankind away from God. Posing as recreational lures outside the church, these forces are moreover seen as inadequate in fully satisfying the

individual's emotional needs. Movies, television, dancing, drinking, mah-johngg, movie magazines, activities of dating or enhancing one's love life (as described by Schak, 1972)-- all are continually referred to as forces which draw people away from living within the spirit of Jesus. The brethren are also faced with the reality that approximately 95 percent of the population of Taiwan is non-Christian and according to a recent study (Grichting, 1972), three out of four of the non-Christian population are hostile to Christianity. It is no wonder then that the brethren refer to these non-Christians as "wai bang ren" (外邦人), i.e., strangers or outsiders. This name expresses the distinctiveness of the brethren's church world for in common usage, "wai bang ren" refers to a person from a foreign country. Some of the particular hostility to the Local Church per se is brought about by its boisterous meetings. One of the sub-district halls of the church, located in an apartment building, was recently forced to move when other apartment dwellers complained to police regarding the noise. Much of the other hostility arises as the brethren seek to make headway both in Taipei and in the central and southern parts of the island by preaching the gospel during local religious bai bai (festivals). In the case of Taipei city, the church's weekly gospel meetings in the centrally located park may interrupt a leisurely stroll as one is pulled

in to listen to hymns and preaching.

Moreover, the testimonies portray the secular life as fraught with problems at every stage in the individual's life, problems which often make life seem worthless and uninteresting. Serious illness, financial worries, family conflicts, retirement, old age, and the rigors of the educational system are each discussed in church meetings with a frankness that reveals much about the troubles facing each age group.

Perhaps one of the most tragic categories on the island is composed of the many soldiers who were moved to Taiwan in 1948 as the Kuomintang forces of Chiang Kai-shek retreated. Many of these men left wives and families on the mainland. Some never remarried. Once retired from the army at age 55, these men are left with a lump sum (according to rank) as a pension for service and thrown into the job market with few skills to compete with college and high school graduates in a rapidly modernizing society. Despite the existence of a retired serviceman's association, many, if not most, are forced to fend for themselves.

For the non-military elderly in their sixties and seventies, urban living geared to the young and active offers few outlets. Some have children and grandchildren living abroad; others, from the mainland, have few younger relatives to care for them. Thus, life in the city for these people is dreary if not difficult.

Statistics support this general observation. Grichting notes that the preference for urban living decreases with age; the lures of the city, convenience, entertainment and business opportunity are often ineffective in meeting the essential security needs of the elderly, particularly those reared in the countryside (Grichting, 336-337).

Testimonies concerning family disputes, primarily between parents and children, indicate the general pattern of a greater independence from parental control that children have in the city. Outings with friends and classmates, whether in parks, museums or at church, often come into conflict with the parents' perception of the children's responsibilities at home: helping younger siblings with their lessons, conscientious studying of their own, as well as the more abstract importance of the presence of the child in reasserting subservience to parental authority.

For the young people in Taipei as well as all over Taiwan, their lives starting at age six are enveloped in the process of succeeding in a highly competitive and regimented educational system. "Taiwan students' lives are very bitter" (台湾學生的生活很苦) is the lament heard most often among students trying to cope with the fact of potential failure. After 1968 public education was offered to all students through the ninth grade. During elementary and junior middle school, the student

attends the school in the district in which he lives but, if his parents have the money and he passes rigorous testing, he may opt to attend private school. From the beginning of junior high, however, the student is involved in coping with a highly competitive program of preparing to enter high school. High schools are ranked academically and tests at the end of the ninth year will determine the student's opportunity to enter the best of the public high schools. Because the quality of each school is common knowledge, the student's successes or failures at this stage become blatant. The school he attends clearly denotes his scholastic capabilities.

The school day is a long one, commencing at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 p.m. Those with low test scores go to night school. The student is also faced with regimentation in the clothes worn (uniforms), hair length (above the ears for both male and female), length of fingernails, and behavior inside and outside the classroom. Each school has a teacher in charge of the moral behavior of students (Schwun Dau Dau Shr, 訓導導師) and student monitors in each grade report to this adult infractions of school rules. Parents may be consulted and in extreme cases of violence, the police may even be contacted. A record is kept of the student's progress, which at the end of each year is handed over to the Education Ministry. Their

grades, delinquencies in reporting to class or other misdemeanors, and admittance of guilt in cases where rules have been broken, are all noted and examined by advisors and teachers. Should it be discovered that the student monitor knowingly fails to report a fellow student, his name may be placed on the bulletin board as having failed to comply with school rules in carrying out his responsibility.

Most schools take children of one sex, but in those that have both male and female student, the classes are not coeducational. Contact between male and female students is discouraged. In one case in which a male student addressed a letter to a co-ed in care of the school, the letter was opened and read by one of the advisors and the female student (who was not even aware of the attentions of the boy) was scolded for having encouraged her admirer (p.i.).

For the ambitious junior or senior school student, life revolves around an ability to progress to the next stage of education. Five and a half days of schooling per week leave students with only Saturday afternoons and Sunday recreation. In better schools, even vacations are filled with half-day lessons to prepare students for the coming semester. Failure to attend such special classes will often cause the student to trail fellow classmates at the beginning of the new school year. The student thus becomes aware that such strict features of the educational

system will determine his future. One month after the test for college entrance is given in the beginning of July, the newspapers in Taipei publish a long list with each student's name, university, and department for which he has successfully tested. The universities and colleges, like the high schools, are rated academically. Here then, after two days' testing, the results of an individual's twelve years of intensive competition are publicly posted. For males, the tension of examinations extend even to their military service where tests will determine whether one is to begin as an officer or private, i.e., to what extent his army life will be one of hardship.

Family, male-female, and school problems dominated the testimonies of the young people. The prominence of these areas of tension is paralleled by the major problems young people bring to the offices of a free psychological clinic, called "Professor Jyang" (Jyang Lau Shr). The young adults may call in and talk with a counselor on the phone or make an appointment to see a counselor at a later date. The number of problems discussed are reported by categories in the Professor Jyang Newsletter, published monthly. One such newsletter recorded cumulative totals of these problems from December 1970 until November 1972. Of the 11,998 cases, the three most frequently discussed problems were school (2,597; 21.7%), love (1,926; 16.05%) and family (1,464; 12.2%). The church seemed to provide

the same emotional release as the clinic in encouraging young people to discuss openly (except in the case of love which was confined to dialogue between a young person and a more mature young brethren) and keep in perspective their personal problems.

In addition to the problems of life in Taipei for the student, parents, and retired military, church members are affected by the repressed animosity between the local population and those mainlanders who came to Taiwan after 1949. These latter now number approximately 14 percent of the population (Grichting, 1972, 19), but hold the great majority of positions of authority in the army and government bureaucracy. For older Taiwanese educated in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation (1895-1945), the command of Mandarin (the official language used in government and schools) is marginal at best. To many of the mainlanders reared in the cities of China, the Taiwanese and their cities lack the sophistication for which the mainland is remembered. The fact that many of the mainlanders living in Taiwan left large parts of their families behind gives them a certain feeling of uprootedness; in contrast, the knowledge that Taiwan is their home gives the Taiwanese a sense of continuity in which many of the traditional folk and familial customs still play a predominant role, even in urban Taipei. This is not to say that there have been no changes in Taiwanese customs and attitudes as a result of urban migration and

industrialization. These differences do, however, contrast the experiences of the two groups and serve as factors inhibiting close personal contact. Even among the young, whose experiences are more nearly similar, the inability of so many of the mainlanders (including those born on Taiwan) to speak the local Taiwanese dialect serves to perpetuate the mutual suspicion and negative stereotyping which the foreigner is so accustomed to hearing.

In summary, the above overview of life in secular Taipei comprises a description of the outermost of the three concentric circles in the brethren's total world. As will be seen later in discussing the brethren's view of the church life, the members are offered this life as an alternative to hardships faced in the outside environment.

Denominational Christianity

If we read church history, from the second century to the present day, we see many other substitutes (for Christ). One which has been much used is forms. How many forms and rituals there are in Christianity, and how they have taken the place of Christ! Another substitute is the teachings--even the very teachings about Christ. ...Theology is still another substitute...Theology replaces the reality which is Christ Himself (Lee, n.d.d.,4).

In this statement, Witness Lee summarizes one of the basic criticisms leveled against other Christian groups by the Local

Church: the disunity among the world's Christians is viewed as resulting from man's egotistical failure to let his own rational doctrines be subjugated to the spirit and words of Christ. The proliferation of Protestant denominations and sects on an island as small as Taiwan makes the individual acutely aware of the chaos of the Christian world. Whereas on the mainland different denominations would often concentrate their efforts in one or several provinces, with certain mutually recognized spheres of influence, the arrival of mainland refugees led to an influx of various missions and churches on the island which hitherto had been primarily Presbyterian territory. Swanson notes that as early as 1954 there were 33 denominations represented in Taiwan; by 1968 there were 52 (Swanson, 1970, 88-89; unless otherwise indicated, information regarding mission and church activity in Taiwan derives from this work). At the outset, most of these churches concentrated on rebuilding their membership and organizations to prepare for the inevitable swift return to the mainland. Unable to converse in the local Taiwanese dialect, the missionaries who fled the mainland reaped most of the harvest of converts among the newly-arrived and dislocated mainland soldiers and bureaucrats. This led to a situation in which congregations became split according to the mainland/Taiwanese dichotomy.

The first ten years of Nationalist rule in Taiwan saw a sharp rise in the number of conversions. As the new decade

began in 1960, the conversion rate and church attendance began to slacken. According to my missionary informants, much of this was due to the greater security and rising economic opportunities. This relationship between economics and conversions is confirmed by the general finding of a study conducted under the auspices of the Tainan Theological College. This survey concluded that in both northern and southern Taiwan, churches are in greater abundance in poorer districts, also noting the relation between low economic and educational levels (Freytag, 1969, 25-29). However, some of the slack must also be attributed to the process of early evangelization and subsequent organizational problems facing many of the mission groups. One native Taiwanese recalled a situation in Taichung in the early fifties in which each new convert was given 1,000 N.T. for burning ancestors' tablets. The successes were noted among Canadian Presbyterians who were providing funds for evangelical work. What was not reported (according to my informant) is the failure of these "rice Christians" to come to church having once received the much-needed funds. Organizational problems also beset the various denominations. The Presbyterians who previously had concentrated their activities among the Taiwanese living in the countryside soon found that there was a need to redirect their activities to the cities. With the economic changes

taking place in both rural and urban Taiwan, the churches found it difficult to adapt to the faster pace created by industrialization. New converts gained during the crisis of political insecurity were now caught in the maelstrom of building a new economic security. In the last years of the '60s, the Presbyterians, for one, sought to cope with this new phenomenon by offering experimental projects such as "seminars on credit unions, agricultural projects, inter-denominational cooperation, and joint action in weaker districts where pastors of stronger churches would assume responsibility to assist in the evangelical witness of weaker churches." (Swanson, 1970, 103) Yet migrants to the city often lost contact with their old churches with the result that many ceased attendance completely.

As a corollary to greater political security, many local Christian leaders had a desire for independence from missionary controls. The claim that Christianity is a foreign religion is one that had plagued missionaries in China from the outset; it is still one of the most difficult barriers to overcome in preaching the gospel. Furthermore, the attempts of American missionaries to involve ministers and churches in activities which could lead to social reform revealed the dangers of transplanting the social gospel to the Taiwanese setting without taking into consideration the realities of Taiwan's political atmosphere. Not all mission groups were willing to indigenize

their churches; of those that did, the initial attempt to place the economic burdens on the shoulders of the population led to the revelation that the previous tutelage and dependence hampered the development of a sense of dedication and pride among the general membership. As an example, one informed source noted that his church was faced with a major crisis when its Chinese President, a strong and popular leader, came into conflict with the mission board. One incident was reported in which a church worker told the president that he took orders from the missionaries, not from him.

Recent attempts at indigenization of churches in Taiwan (in the case of the Southern Baptists, 1969 statistics show that 24 out of 102 congregations were self-supporting; Swanson, 1972, 113) as well as more developed ecumenicalism have sought to overcome some of these early problems. Among high school and college students there is the Campus Crusade for Christ and the Campus Evangelical Fellowship, which seek to bring younger people into direct contact with the evangelical process. Monthly meetings of ministers of various denominations seek to strengthen the sense of cooperation among all Protestants. Yet the problems of disunity are not easily overcome. The threat to the individual minister's territorial hegemony over his congregation often hampers the development of ecumenicalism. Since each minister claims the right to lead a congregation

and congregations are not linked to territory, doctrinal differences are the formal basis for the divisions and are not easily abandoned since with them would go the ministers' particular claims to a following. Thus, it is difficult to move from talking about unity to instituting more practical programs of cooperation which stress common Christian activity including work for conversion.

These are the most striking attributes of denominational Christianity viewed critically by Local Church members. On the one hand, the chaos of modern Christianity is seen as a result of a dependence on man-made organizations. The corollary to such human design is the transference of the rules and institutions of the outside world to the realm of church life. When critically appraising the formality of the denominational Christian services, the brethren most particularly refer to the latter's lack of freedom and natural spontaneity (bu dz you, 不自由 ; bu dz ran, 不自然,). A minister not only presides over his flock on a podium above and in front of the chapel but organizes and directs the service like a teacher in a classroom. The congregation is a passive receptacle of the minister's instructions; prayer, hymns, sermon--all follow a clearly set pattern. Such an attitude extends even to the approach of the ecumenical movement, which seeks to deal with the problems from

the top of the organizational ladder by ministers and mission boards.

In addition to the criticism of the defined schedules of denominational services, the sermons are perceived as products of rational thinking rather than as expressions of spontaneous inspiration. The result of this is what Witness Lee refers to as RELIGION (dzung jyau, 宗教). Its representatives in the Christian world are Protestantism (Ji Du Jyau) and Catholicism (Tyan Ju Jyau). To the Local Church brethren, the term "religion" has a negative connotation; it is the outward manifestation of group organization and rational thought. In contrast, the group sees itself as the earthly representative of Christ's Body and its members, infused with His Spirit, as acting only on direction from this spirit.

Local Church

We now come to the central sphere of the three that comprise the world of the Local Church member. Since this study focuses around this sphere, the following will be merely a summary of aspects to be dealt with at length in further chapters. The perception of the characteristics of the Local Church is affected by the way in which the worlds of secular society and denominational Christianity are seen. How the spirit is to overcome the flesh and mind is conditioned by the way the latter two are conceived.

Total direction by the spirit is in opposition to the demands of the flesh as well as to the structure of secular organizations and denominational Christianity. In contrast to the other spheres all decisions for the brethren, from those within the church to those that deal with one's behavior outside church grounds, are to be made through complete subservience to the spirit of Jesus. Problems are to be solved by prayer and by communication with Jesus in which His Spirit gives members a "feeling or awareness" (gan jywe, 感覺) of the direction they must take. One member said that each morning after he awakens he prays that Jesus will give him a feeling as to how many layers of clothing he should wear to protect his health. This contrast of dogmatic aspects of doctrine in denominational Christianity to direction by Jesus' spirit within the Local Church has practical implications to the brethren. They consider that if one accepts such direction by Jesus' spirit, then both the individual and church will best be able to respond to changes in the social environment. Any strict adherence to rules or dogma is seen to lead to atrophy of the spirit in which it loses its adaptive function for coping with a variety of experiences.

Within the church, all members are seen as brothers and sisters with distinctions of rank deemed unimportant. Even those responsibilities that are delegated to elders, co-workers,

and deacons are not imposed by man-made rules; the definition of these offices are clearly stated in biblical passage (see Chapter III). Those positions whose occupants need confirmation by elders are filled after prayer and communication with Jesus. The elders say they are given a general feeling of who should be appointed. For smaller duties within the church, members volunteer. Theoretically, the member is never coerced; rather a natural inclination swells within him that urges him to fulfill a particular duty. In both cases, church members contrast the use of one's natural impulses as directed by Jesus with the cultural rules and order of the flesh and mind. Man, in his natural state, had no sin; it was in Adam's eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (giving vent to the powers of the mind) that man asserted his cultural independence by refusing to submit to the will of God (a fact emphasized to me by elder and co-worker alike). What the brethren mean by natural (dz ran, 自然 ; for further discussion see Chapter VI) is the return of man to his natural state under God within the pure boundaries of the church. The Local Church is seen as reestablishing God's authority by complete submission of its brethren to the desires of Jesus. In seeking to transcend cultural bonds, all members are equals who speak and think with one spirit, returning to their natural states as the representative of Christ's Body on earth. The church whole is thus the manifestation of His

Body on earth.

All brethren are Christ's servants (pu ren, 僕人) and each is seen as part of an organic body, fulfilling any role which fits his capabilities. Thus, an accountant at a bank serves as Assembly Hall accountant; another member, particularly proficient in Chinese calligraphy, paints signs and writes characters of hymns on enlarged sheets of paper so that all can easily read during special meetings. If there is a need for an electrician or plumber, an announcement is made for anyone who may know about such repairs. One day I found many younger brothers digging up water pipes to check for leakage; when a room was added to the Assembly Hall for the co-worker, the brothers themselves became carpenters.

In becoming a part of the church family, the brethren must make a break with many customs of the past, particularly those related to Buddhism and ancestor worship. That the large majority have been from the outset mainlanders who arrived after 1949 is no surprise to the members. The analogy often recited is to Abraham, who before he could found a new religion was called upon to leave his father's home and thus break with the past. For them, Taiwan was a strange land. The uprooted mainlander, without ancestral tablets and graves to reinforce traditional behavior and moral patterns, needed to forge new means for dealing with the emotional and societal problems of urban Taiwan.

It is no surprise then that 80 percent of the church brethren are mainlanders and their inroads among the Taiwanese community are primarily with the younger ones whose experiences in urbanizing Taiwan are most nearly similar to those of the mainland counterparts.

In short, the unity of purpose in the church contrasts its "cleanliness" to the "dirt" of an atomistic and confused outside world. Each individual, whatever his background, can find strength and predictability within its boundaries. For the student, the harsh competition of his educational environment is replaced by a cooperative and sensitive spirit; many of the elderly can find a purpose in their ability to participate fully in many church activities. The frustrations and complexities of promotion within the military and bureaucracy are juxtaposed against a church setting in which long and devoted service is rewarded by a deaconship or perhaps an eldership (or the hope of one). Remarking at a meeting of graduating college seniors, one deacon, an ex-military officer, noted his frustration when after developing a close relationship with each of his commanding generals, they were soon replaced, thus thwarting his promotional ambitions. Perhaps this was "the Lord's plan" (ju de an pai, 主的安排) as he said, or even a rationalization of his situation. But the significance of this statement is in its contrast to life within the church realm where under a single

and continuing ruler, His will makes the result of loyal service more predictable.

This predictability is extended to parents, who find the atmosphere in the church superior to the vagaries of the wild life of downtown Taipei. For the young, the church offers a compromise between their desired independence and parental control in the church, they can meet with friends in meetings separate from the adults and can forge new relationships with members of the opposite sex under the guise of spiritual activity acceptable to their parents. The church hence provides a place free from excessive regulations but still subject to the subtle force of group values and acceptable patterns of interaction. Despite these group pressures, which will later be discussed more fully, the fact that they are not formulated gives the members a sense that within the church there are no rules like those that exist outside its boundaries. The prescribed regulations of secular life have been replaced by subordination to the spirit of Jesus.

In the next two chapters the discussion will turn to an examination of the means by which the Local Church brethren maintain both their organization and the objective reality of their world view. In being baptized at the Local Church, the member is told that he has become a "new man." His baptism symbolizes his break with his old self and he begins his

spiritual growth within the church as "tabula rasa." The goal of this gradual development is to assure his acceptance of church organization and world view as the guiding principles of his life. As such, the total process may be considered one of "thought reform" which is based on two pillars, each corresponding to the facets of organization and world view. In Chapter V, I shall consider the means of sustaining organizational unity and harmony from the standpoint of social (in the brethren's case, religious) activities of the Local Church. In terms of the original dialectic this is the externalization phase of the world-building process. I shall then turn in Chapter VI to the methods by which the brethren internalize the group's world view as a model for such activities.

CHAPTER V

ACTIVITIES

Among the brethren, two metaphors are commonly used with reference to church organization. Within the gates of their church, the members see their relationships and activities as being similar to those of an extended Chinese family. But with regard to the secular world, they stand poised as Jesus' army, ready to struggle with and overcome all outside forces. In discussing the features which tie the church members together as a social group, I shall do so in the context of these two metaphors, beginning with the church as Jesus' army.

Clifford Geertz (1966) has called the world view of a religious group both a model of the world around and a model for action. As the first, it furnishes the group with a map for perceiving the boundaries of the group's total environment. As a model for action, it provides individuals within the group with certain motivations and values on which to base their behavior. Moreover, a continuing faith in the reality of such a world view rests on experiences in everyday life. The world view directs one's actions; the results of these actions in turn serve either to reinforce or subvert the original world

view. Thus, the relationship between world view and experience becomes one of feedback between the two.

The problem faced by brethren in the Local Church is that of protecting their world view from other presentations of reality prevailing in non-Christian Chinese society and in other Christian churches. This problem is complicated by two facts: the first is that most of the brethren spend much of their daily lives working and studying in an environment outside the church bounds. Secondly, the brethren, in attempting to convert persons outside the group, must constantly come into contact with people who do not view activities in the outside world as do the brethren. The brethren are consciously aware that they must strive to create experience which renders the world view meaningful or in other terms to create a plausibility structure which supports their faith in the world view. These activities provide the context for the brethren to support the unity and solidarity of the group, and thus to experience the reality of the church's world view.

Despite the attempts to protect the church life from secular incursions, their organizational goal of gaining converts necessitates the brethren's designing a strategy for contacting and conquering the forces in the outside world without being contaminated in the process. Soon after I came to the church,

I realized that one of their self-images was as Jesus' army. The day before they were to go on a major gospel march (and henceforth each time they prepared to preach), the brethren repeatedly verbalized this image during the church meeting: "God's army is (will be) gospel preaching!" The next day, on January 1, 1971, the gospel march included brethren from all of the fourteen Assembly Halls in the Taipei Local Church. During this march I was able to film the proceedings, the purposes for the filming being two: first, it allowed me to review the patterns of interaction between church members and those outside the group. Secondly, by showing the film at different times to various other Christian and non-Christian Chinese as well as the brethren themselves, I elicited comments regarding the public behavior of the brethren. The reactions ranged from calling them madmen and comparing their behavior to that of communists, to noting how the brethren seemed oblivious to proper limitation on public behavior in Chinese society. The reaction of the young brethren was very different. Neither I nor my assistant overheard any comment that might be interpreted as critical of behavior seen in the film. On the contrary, they seemed to get immense pleasure from viewing themselves and their parents on the screen.

The film records patterns of behavior which are considered

over-aggressive and strange in Chinese society. Yet, the march served to recreate in actual experience the basic features of the church's own world view. In the first place, the brethren see themselves as members of Jesus' army going out into hostile territory (on what is in essence "search and convert" missions). As members of this army, they wear white vests on whose front and back are written in red letters spiritual slogans such as: "Jesus is Lord" and "I am a sinner." Aside from the advertising effect of these garments, I regard the wearing of them as a prophylactic due to their emphasis on Jesus' protecting them on the march. This prophylactic function is much like that of the amulets worn by participants in the Boxer Rebellion to protect them from their enemies' bullets as well as like that of the seals worn by many Taipings in their Christian rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century (Jen, 1973, 102). The army, after stating its lack of fear and preparing itself at the outset by calling out the name of Jesus who is their shield, goes out on a march--singing and playing musical instruments, stopping at intervals to call out slogans. Individuals, much like scouts, are sent in front of the group to pass out leaflets and prepare the territory for the oncoming army.

The second stage begins once the brethren reach the Taipei Central Park. Some of the brethren are assigned to go to a

center amphitheatre and prepare for the gospel meeting. Others go out to bring strollers into the main area where they are met by other brethren who try to get them to give their names and addresses. "Guards" stand at the entrance to each aisle making it difficult for anyone to leave casually once he is corralled into this area. Finally, the observer is struck by the patterns of interaction between the brethren and outsiders. In the pushing and pulling of casual strollers in order to get them into the center amphitheatre, the brethren break rules of public behavior, causing confusion among the non-initiated who most often do not know how to react to such behavior. For instance, how does a young person in Chinese society, taught to show respect to his elders, forcefully exert himself in order to escape the clutches of the elder brethren? To escape these clutches, the outsider must himself break the rules of public behavior and many are unable to accomplish this. Once possible converts are drawn into church territory by the brethren, the latter then use more traditional means of solidifying friendships, from which the individual finds it difficult to break away. They are brought to the church meetings and are befriended by church brethren, and will not be able to leave the church without ending these personal associations.

While the march from each Assembly Hall was held only this once, weekly gospel activities at the Central Park follow the

same procedure. During the course of my fieldwork, I noted that the actual number of new converts gained from these activities did not match those who joined through personal contact. This suggested that the importance of the gospel march went beyond its expressed purpose of gaining new members. In a general sense, the march may be seen as a process on which the members, supported by the force of group numbers, can train themselves in the means of evangelization. Moreover, when they break rules of public behavior, their actions can be considered ritual statements that symbolize their dissociation from the social forms of outside society. Even the hostility sometimes shown to them merely supports their view that they are dealing with an adversary in a hostile environment. In conscious recognition of the non-conformity of such aggressiveness, the brethren are stating that as Christians in the Local Church, they are subject to direction by the spirit of Jesus rather than to man-made prescriptions for social behavior. It should further be noted that the march was followed up by three days in which new converts were initiated into the church in baptismal meetings. While many of the new converts were gained through personal contact other than the march, the effect of immediately following up the march with such meetings served to solidify the group and reinforce the view that through the activities of the march,

the spirit of Jesus, manifested in the church body, was slowly gaining the upper hand over the adversary forces of the FLESH or secular society. The march and gospel meetings hence provide a means by which the Local Church brethren, in patterns of interaction, symbolically convey their world view. They create in their experience a reality which conforms to and supports the beliefs expressed in that world view (here the ideas of Berger and the symbolic interactionists are illuminating).

Marching is only one of the means whereby the brethren maintain the commitment of all to the church and its world view. Focusing on realities within the gates of their church, the brethren organize their relationship and activities in ways similar to those of an extended family. This image is invoked in both hymns and testimonies. It is often cited that all brothers and sisters within the church must be like children, faithfully obeying the directions of the father, Jesus. Like children they are active and possess few inhibitions, spontaneously calling out the name of Jesus, loudly singing hymns, offering testimonies-- in short, freely expressing their emotions which in the outside world must be carefully controlled. (One non-Local Church informant who was studying several forms of Chinese boxing said that this feature of a child-like spontaneity is somewhat similar to that expressed in various forms of Chinese boxing. Here

proper balance and successful defense can be learned only if one is not overburdened with mental thoughts. Thus, there is a similarity between the Taoist notion of the purging of one's mind to reach the state of "pure man" and the church's attack on the use of the mind. In both cases, men's thoughts are seen as leading to frustration and unhappiness in life.)

Organization in the church has certain terminological and functional characteristics similar to the Chinese family, some of which have been already noted. Within each Assembly Hall, the primary divisions are in terms of Jya (family); at this level occurs the church communion ceremony where the brethren concentrate on praise of Jesus, on which the church family fortunes rest. Those in authority are Jya Fu Dze, who assume decision-making responsibilities in the church family analogous to the Jya Jang (head of family) of the traditional Chinese household. The jya fu dze are often called in to speak to younger brethren regarding the latter's personal problems. Several cases occurred in which they attempted to serve as middlemen in arranging marriages for brethren within the church. Furthermore, as each Local Church maintains a corporate independence (a prime feature for existence of lineage as described by Freedman, 1958, and Potter, 1968, e.g.), elders (jang lau, 長老) assume responsibility for the economic well-being of church properties. As in a Chinese lineage, even in death

the brethren seek to remain together. A portion of a mountainside in the outskirts of Taipei was purchased by one brother and from this, plots for gravesites are sold to brethren at nominal prices.

Moreover, to reinforce family ties, church brethren frequently eat together. Love feasts (ai yan) are held at the church in which each household brings a dish to share, usually to mark a special occasion, e.g., the arrival or departure of a brother or sister. Even invitations to dine at other brethren's homes are referred to as "ai yan." While at a traditional Chinese banquet individuals are throughout the meal continuously toasting each other, the rice and sorghum wines are, in the church love feasts, replaced by hymns. Individuals rise and invite one or several brethren to sing a hymn, imbibing the one true spirit, that of Jesus.

Even more important is the general show of concern the family has for its members. For the vast majority of Local Church members detached from their mainland homes, their extended families exist only as memories. References to their fellow brethren as "brother" (di syung, 弟兄) and "sister" (dz mei 姊妹) serves to reinforce the church as their surrogate extended family. Any problem is met with sympathy and genuine concern. Whenever one of the brethren is sick at home or in the hospital, others visit him and pray for his recovery in

church meetings. When students take university entrance examinations, it is a custom in Taiwan for family members to accompany these students to the testing area (pei kau, 陪考) and wait for them outside. Before the examination, the church not only published a list of the various brethren who were to be tested, encouraging other members to pray for them, but also arranged that at each school in the area, brothers and sisters themselves would accompany church members. Also as in the case of the traditional Chinese family, an individual's reputation is closely associated with and reflects on that of his family. In the case of the church, when one changes residence, he is given a letter of introduction to the Local Church or Assembly Hall in the area in which he will be living so that all will know he is a brother or sister in good standing.

Another example of church involvement in the individual's life is revealed by the crisis faced by Chinese males' induction into the army. Before two young men left for training camp, one of the jya held a meeting to bid them farewell. At this meeting, the testimonies dealt primarily with difficulties and experiences the older brethren had while in the army. One of the brothers who had recently completed his army training related how his constant prayers and communication with Jesus had lightened the burden of the harshness of army life. When in the army, he preceded each difficult endeavor with fervent

older sisters, and concluded the evening with group games.

For older students, vacations are often filled with what the church refers to as "living the church life." (Gwo Jyau Hwei Sheng Hwo, 過教會生活) This offers them the opportunity to experience an intensive total involvement in church life and further serves as a format for future commitment to the local church. In January of 1972, Witness Lee returned from Los Angeles for special meetings held in the First Girls' School of Taipei. On this occasion, it was decided that the high school and college students would partake in living the church life for a week. The brothers of the Eighth Assembly Hall roomed together in an empty apartment owned by the family of one of the brethren. The sisters set up sleeping facilities at the Assembly Hall. At 6:00 a.m. the brethren arose and had a short prayer before breakfast. They then proceeded to the large First Assembly Hall for a gathering of students from throughout Taiwan. In the afternoon, smaller meetings were held in the Assembly Halls (after a short nap). Once dinner was concluded, all gathered for a mass meeting in the First Girls' School where Witness Lee spoke for an hour each night and the brethren sang hymns and offered testimonies on the necessity for living the church life.

Thus, the leaders of the church, by funneling all extra-curricular activities into the church, seek to establish a closed

network for satisfying the individual's emotional needs. All such activities reinforce the oft-cited maxim that "the church is our home." (Jyau hwei shr wo men de jya, 教會是我們的家). In contrast to this atmosphere of concern, one Christian minister lamented about his troubles in getting members of his own congregation to visit their sick brethren in the hospital.

Furthermore, the church serves as a model for correct behavior. When an unmarried sister (a co-worker) was seen riding to a meeting sitting on a motorcycle behind a male co-worker, she was subtly reprimanded at a Sunday meeting by a disapproving deacon. Young people are also guided in what is considered proper attire. Before each large special meeting, the female co-worker suggested to the sisters that they wear sleeved dresses in sedate colors. Even the problem of relations between the sexes was discussed by a couple of leaders who felt that the church must guide the young brethren regarding this serious matter.

Regarding behavior, there is a recognized distinction between generations. A group of young people desiring to play bridge came to my apartment one evening clearly indicating that such activity was not to be publicized because its non-spiritual nature would offend some of the older brethren. However, the involvement of the elder brethren in such matters serves as an important plus in gaining the support of non-Christian

parents for their children's attending activities in the church. This transference of the traditional prestige of the Chinese family to the church is important in view of the feeling that much of the prestige of the extended family has been lost in the urban milieu. The approach to controlling behavior is seen as a "natural" one, using the power of group pressure to change a wayward brother or sister. In one case, Witness Lee noted that this approach has proved valuable in the United States where so many of the new younger brethren were former hippies, shoeless and hairy. He wrote that he never demanded that they cut their hair or wear shoes but found that after a time, the young people were directed by Jesus' spirit to make changes in their appearances and behavior. With the perception of the church family as a manifestation of Jesus' unified body, conformity to group standards is evaluated as mere submission to direction of Jesus' spirit.

The physical structure of the church home is further coordinated to the functional prerequisites for family life. From the outset, the assembly halls were designed by Witness Lee as a contrast to what he considered to be artificial grandiose structures of denominational Christianity. The simplicity of the church buildings provides an atmosphere for "natural" behavior among the church members. As one enters through the gate of the Eighth Assembly Hall, there is a large

garden courtyard to the right. Beyond the garden is a single-storied wooden structure with sliding glass-paned doors around its sides. To its left are two wooden structures. The smaller of the two is used primarily for youth meetings and houses library and Sunday School materials as well as musical instruments for the church gospel marches. The larger building contains in its rooms an office for the jya fu dze where membership files are kept, a library of material published by the church, and a larger room often used as a dining commons (where students often study) with a nearby kitchen. Attached to this room is a smaller one used as a residence for one brother who serves as church custodian. Thus, the church buildings function as a foundation for all family activities; the gate which separates the family from the outside world and the openness of the setting within the gate helps condition the members' perception of their church in contrast to the complexity and elaborateness of secular urban living.

The success of the church as family and the church as Jesus' army are closely interdependent. As a support mechanism for the world view, the organizational structure must be able to maintain the unity and harmony of family life. Without such provisions as mentioned above, the church will be unable to muster the strength necessary in a hostile environment to

accomplish its evangelical tasks whereby the church body can grow through the nourishment of new converts. Conversely, if the church fails in its efforts as Jesus' army, the view of Jesus' eventual supremacy will fade and along with it much of the motivation for group activity in general.

RECRUITMENT

The recruitment of my assistant provides a prototype of how the church members utilize accepted standards outside the church to their own advantage. On one Sunday morning, we decided to attend a baptism meeting at the Eighth Assembly Hall. The previous night my wife, assistant, and myself had been invited to a deacon's home for dinner. This Sunday we were greeted at the gate unsuspecting what was in store for us. I immediately entered, passing a table that had been set up to get information on forthcoming baptisms and sat on the brother's side of the hall. After having organized my hymnals, Bible, and tape recorder, I looked to see where my assistant was seated. Not able to find her, I turned around--only to see her surrounded by a group of older sisters headed by our hostess of the previous night. I was angry and felt guilty for the position that I had forced her in--they were obviously attempting to get her to join the ranks of the reborn. I felt impotent to come to her rescue. Eventually, she acquiesced

to their persuasiveness and became a sister in the Taipei Local Church. That this incident was turned into a triumph, I owe entirely to her. Later on, discussing the event with her, several aspects of church strategies became clearer. In the first place, the sisters, in trying to convince her to be baptized, had told her that she had been amongst them long enough to know whether or not she believed in Jesus. My assistant's reply that she still was not sure fell on deaf ears as the sisters said that rational thought would not lead to belief-- only calling out to the Lord and letting His spirit enter your own can lead to knowing Him. When she said that she was working with me and that some might consider her baptism to have ulterior motives, she was assured that the brethren could separate the two roles. In short, what became clear to my assistant was that if she were to remain working with me there was no alternative but to be baptized as a sister. While an outsider (with regard to Chinese society) such as myself might be tolerated, a local Chinese could not remain within the church grounds while defying the world view that was predicated on Jesus' omnipotence. Moreover, the fact that the pressure began after the invitation to dinner accented another feature of church strategy which we were to see time and time again. My assistant had been invited to dinner by a sister who now with other sisters was coaxing her into joining. Either she must join or break off

all contact with the brethren. Having been invited to dinner by the sister, her "reciprocation" was showing her desire to maintain contact, reflected in the act of baptism. In other cases within the church, neighbors, classmates, business associates--all provide social networks that can be drawn to church rolls by utilizing the various prescriptions for inter-relationships common in Chinese society. My assistant also noted that because she had been invited to dinner by the other sister, refusing her "invitation" to baptism would involve the latter's loss of face and hence end any positive effect that might be gained by my assistant's working with the church among the sisters.

The brethren attempt to engender commitment on the part of the new members in order that the church body may be strengthened and church goals met. This can only be accomplished if the new brother or sister is aware of the correct behavior within the church and the dangers existing outside church bounds. The group's attack on the individual's old self and perceptions is two-pronged. In the first place there is the social approach: initially, prior to baptism the individual is drawn into the church net usually through contact with a friend, neighbor, business associate, or fellow student. His commitment to one or more individuals within the church is broadened to a commitment to the entire church group. Sacrifice of the latter will

mean sacrifice of the former. He or she is slowly drawn into greater participation in church activities; he is absorbed into the church family and made to feel that his place is in the church and he cannot dissociate himself from his proper place. Here the brethren are making use of the traditional Chinese attitude (and fear) that an individual is alone outside the context of one's own family. In the case of each of the church's rites of passage--baptism, marriage, and death, the emphasis is placed on the security of living within the church family. The attempt is to create a closed social network on which the individual is dependent. Once this network is closed, individuals will turn only to other brethren for aid and thus slowly develop a series of reciprocal relationships whose emotional bonds are difficult to break. Leaving the church hence involves breaking off close personal relationships, a painful act, and one that was referred to as the most tragic aspect of the split in church ranks. In addition, the individual is taught that his brothers and sisters are to be depended upon to pray with him when he is beset with troubles, the results in practical terms often being manifested in a job or needed funds. Thus, the individual comes to owe something to Jesus (represented in the church) and often the expression "I owe Him too much" (Wo chyan ta tai dwo; 我欠他太多) is heard. The relationship between the individual and Jesus is expressed

in this way as members become concerned that they can never repay all the things that Jesus (the church) has done for them. Only by remaining in His church can they ever hope to return His favors.

The fieldwork process itself often offered insight into many of the strategies used by the brethren in maintaining the commitment of their baptized members. At the outset (as I noted in the introduction), I had hoped to interview many of the brethren in order to get a good cross section of the makeup of the church. After ten such interviews, the word was passed around that none of the brethren (we had begun with the younger brethren) should submit to our questioning. The young female co-worker put a stop to our project by asking a sister in the church who was a friend of my assistant not to introduce her to anyone in the church, thus eliminating a crucial link of trust we were beginning to establish. Moreover, this co-worker was evasive as to why such a restriction was being placed on me. Finally, I built up enough courage to broach the subject with the elder at the Eighth Assembly Hall and to take my chances on being dismissed completely from work among the brethren. This elder's advice served as my own first lesson of socialization into the church as well as emphasizing the positive features of conflict between researcher and informants in gaining insight into the latter's world view.

The elder said that within the Local Church no one was to be asked about his personal background. Even the church's information cards had only basic information. The brethren should not be subjected to census-like questionnaires as in outside society. Only as the spirit of Jesus directs them to do so should they gradually reveal in testimonies features of their past lives. Such reflection in testimonies involves the important process of viewing the past only in terms of the church's present world view, a crucial feature in the thought reform of becoming a new man under the guidance of Jesus (see Chapter VI). I soon recognized that my questionnaire had the deleterious effect of directing the brethren's thoughts to activities and social networks outside the bounds of the church and so to contemplation of a past not controlled by the interpretation of the church.

While indicating these objections to me the elder nonetheless expressed his overall support of my objectives, suggesting that I utilize a more natural means to discover the living standards of the church brethren. The church leaders themselves attempt to use such natural means by holding meetings at different brethren's homes where they can view quite naturally the life styles of brethren and their families. He asked that I too try to go to homes in the course of establishing amicable ties with church brethren. Thus, both their techniques and my own would correspond

to the view that all aspects of life and self-expressions within the Local Church are natural and spontaneous.

WEEKLY REPERTOIRE

The most natural means available to the church was to schedule continuous activities to take place within the church so that a member's every free moment was consumed. Over the fourteen-month period that I observed the Local Church, I spent most of the time attending evening meetings from three to five times weekly. Because many of the older brethren spoke Mandarin accented heavily with provincial dialects incomprehensible to me, it was necessary at the outset to tape the sessions and then with my assistant to transcribe these tapes. As the year progressed and I became familiar with both accents and language, I was able to transcribe the content of the meetings as they occurred. Although 90 percent of my time was spent at the Eighth Assembly Hall, I also attended meetings at Assembly Halls One, Two, Three, Four, Six, and Seven in order to evaluate and compare their formats. While the particular hymns, biblical passages, and content of the testimonies differed, certain patterns became evident.

While the procedure in the meetings at the Eighth Assembly Hall followed the basic form described in the example given in the introductory chapter, the content varied according to

the particular purpose of the meeting. Taken as a whole, the nightly meetings were viewed by the brethren as fulfilling the total needs of the individual. One church co-worker (Chu, 12/7/72) explained these purposes as follows:

- SUNDAY MORNING (Jyau Tung Jyu Hwei, 交通聚會 : Fellowship) edify and build saints
- SUNDAY EVENING (Bwo Bin Jyu Hwei, 擘餅聚會 : Communion) remembrance of the Lord; eating and enjoying the Lord
- MONDAY (Shr Feng Jyu Hwei, 侍奉聚會 : service meeting) prayer and fellowship regarding Eighth Assembly Hall
- TUESDAY (Syau Pai, 小排 : small home meeting) fellowship and shepherding
- WEDNESDAY (Tai Yu Jyu Hwei, 台語聚會 : not held at all assembly halls)-meeting held in Taiwanese dialect
- THURSDAY (Jen Li Dzau Jyou Jyu Hwei, 真理造就聚會 : truth edification meeting)-discussion of fundamental truth; help practically in daily life; how to read the Bible and pray
- FRIDAY (Dau Gau Jyu Hwei, 禱告聚會) : Prayer meeting
- SATURDAY (Ching Nyan Jyu Hwei, 青年聚會) : Youth meeting

Because the Tuesday night small home meeting is a prototype of the above-mentioned strategy of natural incorporation of members, I shall begin with a discussion of its format, which serves as a training ground for new members who can gradually build relationships with other brethren.

Tuesday Night Small Home Meetings

On Tuesday nights, the brethren at the Eighth Assembly Hall meet in small groups of from six to ten people. Not all the brethren registered at the Assembly Hall are active participants in these meetings and hence the number at each session will

vary. Once a month these groups of which there are seventeen for sisters and twelve for brothers congregate together at the Assembly Hall. Most of these meetings take place in individual's homes although the Jyau Pai which the elder attended was held in a room at the Assembly Hall. In my year of contact with the church, I was able to attend and record the proceedings of 44 of these home meetings. As each Jya was divided into several of these meeting groups, I attended at least one meeting in each Jya. I was unable to attend the sisters' meetings, but through the aid of my assistant, information regarding 12 meetings of one group of younger sisters (between the ages of 20 and 30) was available. The limitations in my contact with individuals on a one-to-one basis, due both to the daily work schedules of the brethren and their discouragement of formal interviewing, led to my increased dependence on these meetings. The small home meetings afforded the best opportunity to get to know many of the brethren personally; for in these meetings, the brethren most often related their personal problems and asked for the advice and prayers of their fellows.

The purpose of the small meeting in the broadest sense is "shepherding" the flock, watching over the growth and development of individual brethren. More specifically, however, the Syau Pai serves three purposes: allowing the members to discover how to apply the church's spiritual formulas practically in

daily situations; training the brethren to participate more fully in larger church meetings; and contrasting life in the Local Church to that in the outside world in accordance with the church's world view. (For comparison with small group meetings on the mainland, See Whyte, 1974).

Practicality

As pointed out previously, one of the main requirements within the church is that all activities occur in a natural fashion. The elder noted that much about the individual's personal life gradually comes to the forefront at the small home meetings; therefore, the leaders themselves often attempt to shift the weekly meetings to the homes of less active brethren so that they can get a better idea of the individual's daily life outside the church and thus be able to relate the church to the particular environment in which he lives.

Informality is the distinguishing feature of the small home meeting. During the meeting, tea is usually served and at its conclusion, sweets and fruits are offered and the atmosphere becomes one of a gathering of friends. Furthermore, while the tempo of the larger meetings is at a faster pace, in the syau pai, problems of individual brethren are discussed in greater depth and in calm conversational tones. The pattern generally followed was that of a problem being presented by one of the brethren and others responding by relating similar experiences

and how they successfully coped with the situation. Other cases involved reinforcing certain patterns of behavior that were suggested in the scriptures or by Witness Lee.

As an example of the first pattern, one brother who was recovering from a serious illness expressed concern over his slow recovery. He said that he had tried calling out the name of the Lord (as suggested in church) but it was difficult for him to call out loud and hence he only did it mentally. The elder noted that he had seen Brother Chen when he first was ill and that he could tell that he was improving. She should realize that getting well was a slow process and that by calling out the name of the Lord, he would continue to improve. For he (the elder) continually calls out to the Lord when he walks and his heart is as strong as a twenty-year-old. At this another brother pointed out how apparently useful is the calling of "O, Lord!" In this same vein, one informant who attended a syau pai of older sisters noted that several of them often discussed the fact that while the sisters attended meetings nightly, their husbands would be angry because they had to wait for dinner. The others then prayed that Jesus would bring the sisters' husbands to church.

In the course of the small meetings, various biblical passages and essays by Witness Lee in Hwa Yu Jr Shr are read and discussed. As certain themes are raised, the brethren learn the efficacy

of behavioral patterns as they are stressed in the revelations of personal experiences. Among these are the practical consequences derived from complete dependence on the Lord: a man almost died from a fever developing from a growth on the right side of his head. A doctor was called in but to no avail, and his fever rose. Finally, in desperation he called on the Lord constantly, prayed, and was cured. In short, the syau pai provides a framework for the individual to reveal tensions and problems of his life and to discover from his fellow brethren that by calling on the name of the Lord and coming to church regularly, practical consequences will occur.

Training

After first being baptized in the Local Church, many of the brethren have difficulty in following the fast pace of the service due to their unfamiliarity with the format of the meeting. Quick movement from prayer to hymn to testimonies and prayer-reading of the Bible leaves many in a state of confusion. Furthermore, because they are new members, many are unwilling to open up and express their personal problems before a group of unfamiliar people. The syau pai offer an opportunity for the individual to build close relationships with a small group of people as well as to learn the basics of church doctrine in its relaxed meeting format. Several times it was noted that individuals who had expressed themselves and gained support for their personal

experiences in the syau pai later stood before the whole assembly to testify. As will be examined further in the discussion on ritual, the individual gets practice in the proper means of prayer, giving testimony and pray-reading of the Bible. Furthermore, the member becomes familiarized with the dominant themes in the Local Church life--complete dependence on Jesus, confusion in the outside world, the church as family. All of these direct the new member into the proper framework for self-expression in church meetings.

Local Church Life

To bring the new brethren into the daily life of the Local Church, there is a need to encourage him to accept the world view of the church and to reinforce this view through revelations of personal experiences. In each case, problems in the world outside the church are contrasted to unity and harmony within the church. Conflict within families is resolved by fervent prayer and attempts to get members of family to attend church regularly. The use of the rational mind to explain Christianity and the failure of Buddhism to satisfy one's personal needs are contrasted to the total dependence on Jesus' spirit for resolution of problems in the church. In one syau pai, the elder noted that in his office at the Taiwan Electric Company, because he and his colleague both belonged to the church, the

atmosphere was not noisy and chaotic as in the other offices where discussions of mah-jongg, movies, and other frivolous matters were held.

While the outside world has rules and regulations to control behavior of young people, in the church exposition of such rules is eschewed. The brethren state that merely bringing the young people into the church will lead them into correct modes of behavior. In this context, the syau pai provides a forum for revelation of proper behavior and morality for church members. Examples of brethren who smoked and drank alcohol before joining the church are cited. In one such example, a brother who had quit smoking after baptism noted how he later tried one cigarette and was immediately overcome with a fit of vomiting and fever. Another brother said that although he prayed for his sick son to get well, the latter didn't. He finally realized that he had promised the Lord to throw away his television and had broken his promise. Immediately after he put the television set outside the house, his son recovered. One sister told how when invited by some of her friends to participate in using a planchette for spiritualistic readings, the panel did not move because she was under the control of Jesus' spirit only. The proper clothing for sisters to wear (no short skirts or wild colors), which newspaper to read, which secular organizations to join (one co-worker said that after fervent prayer she decided not

to join the Kuomintang political organization because it was man-made rather than spiritual)--all are means of properly defining the norms of correct behavior for brethren in the church.

In addition to defining the attributes of Local Church life and contrasting these to those outside the church, the syau pai provide a forum for discussion of particular problems within the church. Certain brethren's failure to attend meetings is discussed so that others can visit the delinquent's home. Problems in preaching the gospel as well as instances where people attempt to avoid contact with church brethren here come to the forefront.

Thus, the framework of the syau pai offers an opportunity for members to apply the general themes of the church to specific problems in their daily lives. Discussion of these problems and prayers offered for their solution offer a means for building close relationships and friendship networks with members in the church. The separation of the syau pai into groups according to sex allows both husbands and wives to express and get sympathetic responses to problems which they might be unwilling to discuss with their spouses or in their presence. An overview of problems discussed by various groups reveals middle-aged women relating problems with their husbands and children, as well as physical ailments; older brothers focusing on illness,

retirement, and conflict with their wives; middle-aged brothers discussing their work situations; and younger sisters emphasizing problems in dating and school as well as conflicts with younger siblings and parents. Once these situations are revealed, their solution remains constant: remain in the church and let Jesus' spirit bring harmony and satisfaction into one's life.

Sunday Morning

On Sunday mornings at 6:30 upper middle school graduates involved in the Sunday school program meet at the Assembly Hall for breakfast, prayer, and discussion of the forthcoming session. Classes for elementary school children (there is also a small kindergarten class: are held from 8:30 until 10:00 a.m. The children begin by gathering together in the main assembly hall on Hsiamen Street; they pray together and are taught a simple hymn by one of the teachers. Then they break up into small classes of four age groups divided by sex; kindergarten (here girls and boys are together); first and second grades; third and fourth; fifth and sixth. Each class of from five to ten students and teachers meets in an assigned area of the Assembly Hall and teachers spend the remainder of the time telling Bible stories, reviewing the students' moral behavior during the preceding week and encouraging the students to memorize Bible passages. During this time one older student who has been

appointed by the jya fu dze to be in charge of Sunday School activities wanders throughout the room, listening in on each class in order to evaluate the teacher's and pupil's performances. At the conclusion of the lesson, roll is taken; later red and gold stars are awarded to students for excellence in attendance or for bringing along a friend to church. These are later displayed on a chart in the students' room on the church grounds. Class is dismissed and parents and siblings can be seen accompanying the young children home so that they may return for the regular meeting at 10:30.

The Sunday morning meeting is the largest in the Assembly Hall. The room is filled with approximately 200 members, equally divided between brothers and sisters. On the left, two sections of women sit facing each other, divided by a central aisle with a microphone. On the right, the brothers sit in the same pattern, only in their case the microphone is supported by a podium, for only the brothers are allowed to lead the service. While this male dominance has been espoused from the church's founding, some changes have taken place since the 1940s when women were forbidden to speak in the meetings. Clothing styles have also changed. Today only a few of the older sisters wear black hats to cover their heads; the majority of sisters no longer wear any head covering. This custom began on the mainland and has scriptural basis in I Corinthians 11:2-10:

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels...

The fact that women no longer cover the head is no indication that their general status has changed. Male brethren often cited the analogy that as man is to God so woman is to man. While women are allowed to participate in the meetings of the Local Church, only the brothers are allowed to lead the group in prayers and Bible readings. This is often manifested in the lack of a podium on the sisters' side of the room. Nevertheless, today the rule that women must cover their heads is not followed dogmatically and it was said to me that since the church eschews any hard fast rules in church life, each individual sister may do as the spirit moves her. The fact that most do NOT wear head coverings is explained by suggesting that the latter are an anachronism in modern day China.

The overall pattern of this meeting is the same as that described in the introduction with the addition that at its conclusion, a deacon rises and announces the various activities of the forthcoming week (on the first Sunday of each month he reads to the brethren the financial statement which will be placed on the bulletin board outside the Assembly Hall office.)

The Sunday morning meetings offer a framework for the brethren to evaluate their experiences of the week in the context of the church's general world view. Because the purpose of the meeting is to edify and build the saints (i.e., the brethren), the content of these meetings is maintained at a basic level so that all of the brethren, whatever the extent of their knowledge of church doctrine and the Bible, can gain value from them.

Sunday Night Communion

On Sunday nights, the brethren assemble in the various jya for communion (on the first Sunday of each month communion is held in the main Assembly Hall before the regular meeting.) Once an individual is baptized, he is given a badge with his name and a card which directs him to the jya nearest his home. The badge serves as an introduction to other brethren that he has been baptized, for only those baptized may partake in communion. No case of a Christian from another denomination participating in communion was recorded, although it was said that any baptized

Christian could participate. The wearing of badges by new members clearly identifies them to the jya fu dze. Several brethren also recalled that previously (time unspecified) all members had worn these identification badges, making it unlikely in the smaller jya meetings that those outside the church would participate even if they desire to do so. In the course of this study, I was aware of no case in which a member was denied the right to take communion. Only on the basis of criteria explicit in I Corinthians 5 can a member be excommunicated. The only example provided was that of an older brother at the Third Assembly Hall who had, many years before, married again in Taiwan while his wife was still living on the mainland (considered polygamy by church members.) Descriptions of the process of excommunication were vague; it was merely stated that one's offense could either be announced at a meeting or one of the elders may ask the individual not to attend. The brethren were reluctant to discuss this aspect of church life.

The communion ceremony itself is very simple and takes only about fifteen minutes before the normal service (one co-worker noted that in the case of the Tainan Church, there is little difference between communion and the regular service except that bread is broken and juice drunk during the regular meeting.) During these fifteen minutes, the prayers offered and hymns sung are all directed to praise of the Lord. As

hymns are being sung, two sisters and brothers begin to pass around two large glasses of sweetened juice and unleavened bread (one for each side of the aisle) prepared in the Assembly Hall kitchen. Each of the brethren breaks off a piece of the bread and sips from the glass, passing it on down the row. A brother and sister stand in the aisle which separates the men from the women and take the glass and bread from one side to the other. A final hymn is sung and one of the jya fu dze rises to note that communion has ended. After this, the meeting takes on the form described previously.

Although weekly attendance at communion is considered essential by the brethren, doctrinal emphasis on the symbolism of the juice and bread was rare. As will be seen later in our breakdown of ritual patterns, it may be because to the brethren all meetings (not only communion) are seen as a feast for partaking in the spirit of the Lord. Hence, communion is only one facet of the broader church life.

Monday Night Service Meeting

At first glance, the one feature that distinguishes the Monday night service meetings (held bimonthly in the Assembly Hall as well as occasionally for the entire Taipei Local Church at the First Assembly Hall) is the arrangement of the benches. On this day the seats are set in rectangular fashion with two additional rows placed on both sides of the hall. On the

brothers' side sit the elder, co-worker, several jya fu dze and any special guests. The latter become the focal point for the meeting whose subject matter will concern specific problems and plans for activities in the church (i.e., organization). These brethren will relay to the others the general nature of discussion and decisions arrived upon earlier in the leaders' meetings; in return other jya fu dze will relate specific problems in their jya. For the most part only the jya fu dze and brethren with particular responsibilities in the Assembly Hall attend these meetings (attendance at which ranges from forty to sixty) although anyone may attend. Once the prayers and hymns subside, direction of the meeting is in the hands of one of the leaders who introduces the subject to be discussed. From transcripts of ten of these meetings, the predominant theme discussed is the organization and progress of evangelical activities which is the basis of church growth. Nevertheless, specific aspects of growth of individual members in the church are also examined. Among these are the need to encourage all members to speak and pray openly with the suggestion that the more vocal brethren refrain from dominating the meetings (9/4/72); the need for more mainlanders to attend the Wednesday night meetings conducted in Taiwanese (11/22/72); development of churches in Hong Kong and the United States and encouraging brethren to listen to tapes from these meetings

(9/11/72); and changes in the format of church meetings (9/11/72). Although the meetings are geared for the elder, co-worker and main jya fu dze to relay information on organizational decisions within the church, the latter try to de-emphasize their positions of authority by encouraging comment and criticism from other brethren present. At one meeting (1/31/72), the theme was set by the elder and co-worker who began with prayers for the success of gospel activities. Afterwards, brethren arose to testify regarding the need for preaching and specified their own experiences in doing so. Finally, the jya fu dze in charge of gospel preaching within the Assembly Hall rose to discuss future plans for evangelization. Prefacing his comments with "in the church we all have freedom to express ourselves," he noted that the decisions he was now relaying regarding preaching were only tentative and that the other brethren should express their feelings on the matter. One of the brothers noted a problem with the date chosen and that it should be changed so that more people would be able to attend. Others discussed the best means for passing out gospel tracts and getting newcomers to attend meetings. Then the jya fu dze expressed the need to organize individuals into small groups (which would later meet) to assume responsibility for giving short testimonies, leading hymns, and placing the microphones. Although no

final decision was made, the organizational requirements for accomplishing these activities were set in motion. Most importantly, the leaders had a better idea of how to adjust the Assembly Hall activity to the needs of various jya and the brethren were given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and to offer their AMENs as agreement. Finally, the meeting ended with prayers assuring that with Jesus as their shield, the gospel meetings would succeed.

Wednesday Night Meeting in Taiwanese Dialect

Because of my lack of comprehension of the Taiwanese dialect, I only attended four of the Wednesday night meetings held to allow those unable to express themselves freely in Mandarin to participate in Taiwanese. While Taiwanese and Mandarin speakers belong to the same jya, the existence of such a meeting at eight of the Assembly Halls in Taipei points to a fundamental problem in the Local Church: the means of making inroads among the Taiwanese population on the island and after baptizing them, making them full participants in church life. The members referred to this problem at one Monday night service meeting. They noted that while approximately 50 percent of the Kuting District is composed of Taiwanese, Assembly Hall members of the latter group lag behind at 20 percent. At the same time, brethren from the mainland able to converse in the Taiwanese dialect were encouraged to attend the Wednesday night meetings

to promote the integration of these brethren into the total church group.

The format of the Wednesday night meetings follow that of the Thursday night meetings held in Mandarin with the exception that the former, attended by thirty to forty brethren, is held in dining commons whose size provides a more intimate atmosphere for the smaller group. Often a Taiwanese co-worker (from Fourth Assembly Hall) attends the meeting. One major theme which typifies the testimonies of the Taiwanese is the problem of incurring the wrath of one's family when joining the church:

Before I was a very bad person. When I was drafted into the army, my mother and father hoped I would become good because of the strictness of the army. I would drink, cheat people, and never speak the truth. Once I went out with a friend and got drunk. When we returned, my friend threw up and the guard knew we had been out drinking and we were thrown in jail. Later when I had left the army I went to visit the friend and saw that he had accepted Jesus. So I too accepted Jesus. My parents were angry because they were Buddhist. But once they saw how I changed into a good person, my father accepted Jesus too. My old self has truly died...

A previously published church testimony reveals another aspect of this same general problem caused by traditional Chinese religion:

One of my neighbors is a retired military man. He operates a three-wheel ricksha and believes in Jesus. Later, when he had saved some money, he got married. The wife believed in Buddha and sacrificed to the ancestors. Little by little the

man changed and listened to his wife, did not believe in the Lord any more but in Buddha. He also offered sacrifices to the ancestors because his wife said "We want to honor the ancestors so that later when we are dead, someone will offer sacrifices for us. Then we will have enough to eat in the great beyond." This neighbor bought a house and had a baby. Thereafter, his wife became mentally ill and let the baby fall down from the upper story. Then she acquired a lung ailment and became worse and worse. After this neighbor had money, he changed his belief. But we all know that the Lord never changes. The Lord tells us that we have to take care of ourselves. This neighbor changed his belief and thereafter misfortune befell him. (Eberhard, 1972, 64)

In speaking with mainlanders, I found very few who said they were Buddhist before conversion. Most said they had practiced no religion. In contrast, the Taiwanese convert must often contend with an extended family embedded in Chinese folk religion and ancestor worship. Breaking away from this religious practice involves inevitable conflict with other family members. Furthermore, it should be said that many Taiwanese view traditional religious customs as a means of distinguishing themselves from mainlanders and representing themselves as the true upholders of Chinese tradition. The several cases of life histories of converted Taiwanese revealed a delinquent past, marriage to a mainlander, residency in Japan during the war, conversion while attending college in Taipei, and marital problems. In each case, it was an extraordinary experience that directed the individual into the church.

Recognizing the barrier that family tradition places in the way of the Taiwanese convert, the church members often approach conversion of the Taiwanese through their children. For example, in the Sunday School they attempt to gain allegiance of the parents by stressing cleanliness, obedience, and proper study habits. Once attendance at church results in changed behavior, it is hoped that the parents will tolerate their children's activities because of the practical moral consequences. Still there are cases in which young students must secretly attend church meetings; for if discovered, they will incur the anger of their parents.

For most of the Taiwanese, baptism in the Local Church requires a break with past customs of praying to the ancestors and visiting Buddhist or Taoist shrines. Attempts are made to find compromises that would prevent the brethren from being ostracized by their own families. In one syau pai, the co-worker (who herself was Taiwanese) described that during the Spring Festival when Chinese go to their ancestors' graves to clean them and offer incense, her Catholic sisters (here she noted that Catholics allowed prayers to ancestors) asked her to go along. She said that she went to her father's grave, cleaned it, and placed incense there although she did not pray; if she had, she felt she would have given satan power over her father's soul. Another sister mentioned that when at her

grandmother's insistence she had gone to gravesites, her head began to hurt so badly that only after days of fervent prayer did she recover. In addition, other traditional customs and symbols are frowned upon. The co-worker discouraged her sisters from eating sausage made of pigs' blood (a tasty delicacy in Taiwan); she said that because eternal life exists in blood, "do you want to have a pig or Jesus as your eternal life?"

The need to rid one's household of evil spirits so that Jesus may reign is accented in a testimony offered by the Taiwanese elder. One day while they were visiting his brother-in-law, his wife became suddenly ill and was unable to go home. He rushed home to search for something there which affected her. After a long search, he discovered that there was a pair of chopsticks (just washed by his wife) with dragons painted on them. He immediately destroyed them. Upon returning to his brother's home, he found that his wife (not knowing of her husband's actions) had quickly recovered. The conclusion was that as long as symbols of evil (the dragon here represented the snake in the garden of Eden) exists in one's home, illness and disharmony will plague the family. The testimony also serves as a lesson for others as to the types of changes that one must make in his lifestyle.

The most cogent example of breaking with tradition occurred when a Taiwanese sister tearfully related the story of her

husband's meanderings to her brethren one Wednesday night. With her daughter at her side, she revealed that her husband was seldom at home; rather he was wandering about the town drinking, gambling, and consorting with other women. She had been visited by church sisters who suggested that the ancestor tablets on her mantle kept Jesus from bringing harmony into her home. After prayer, she decided that these tablets must be destroyed. In the center of the room on a table (at the meeting), she had placed a wooden tablet, Buddhist statues, and a container for incense. A Taiwanese co-worker rose and explained each item amid the cries of "O, Lord," by other brethren. Then the items were taken outside and burned. At this, images of an irate husband with murder in his eyes came to my mind. But at the next meeting, the sister related that her husband had not been too angry and had apologized for his past behavior.

Nonetheless, in all of these cases the difficulty in making such major breaks with tradition cannot be underestimated, nor can the constant concern and encouragement of the church family who aid in the individual's transition to this new way of life.

Thursday Night

On Thursday nights, the brethren meet for what is called "Jen Li Dzau Jyou Jyu Ewei" or Truth Edification Meetings.

These meetings concentrate on explanation and discussion of fundamental church truths as well as the application of these truths in daily life (as noted before, all meetings deal with practical application). Attendance of these meetings at the Eighth Assembly Hall (as well as six of the other Assembly Halls where I visited) revealed a format similar to the Sunday meetings, while the actual content was geared to a more in-depth reading and discussion of particular biblical passages. At the Eighth Assembly Hall, the co-worker and jya fu dze throughout the year developed long-range plans for the study of certain books of the New Testament; at the close of these meetings, the co-worker spoke to summarize and expand on the feelings expressed by the brethren during the meetings regarding the important themes within the material. Several times during the year, the brethren read on Thursday nights transcripts from talks delivered by Witness Lee at large special meeting in Taipei (these were read following prayer and hymns). One or several passages dealing with the same subject matter is pray-read by the brethren and testimonies referring to the theme in the passage are offered. Sometimes before giving testimonies, the brethren spend time trying to recite passages memorized from the previous week. But the purpose of the meeting is to train the brethren to give substance to the testimonies of their personal experiences by relating them in the

context of biblical passages.

Throughout the year different phrases dominated the testimonies and biblical passages chosen for discussion. To call the name of the Lord was the first and the brethren related from their own lives the importance of calling on the Lord before undertaking any endeavor. During the period of preparation for living the church life (described earlier in this chapter), the phrase "Gwo jyauhwei sheng hwo" (Live the church life) became the focal point for discussion on the need for gathering with other brethren and growing spiritually which can be accomplished only within the bounds of the Local Church. After Lee's first visit in 1972, "chr he ju" (eat and drink the Lord) was used as expressing the need for constant reading of biblical passages so that the words and thoughts of Jesus can replace one's own. It is at the Thursday meetings that the brethren are trained in using the phrases, relating them to particular biblical passages, and interpreting their experiences in their context. The variety and change of emphasis of these slogans is one of the features of Local Church services criticized by other Christians. Yet within the church, this variety is explained as representing complete submission to the spirit of Jesus, who is continuously offering new inspiration. These changes reflect an important aspect of the group's world view: they are conceptually linked to the changes in modern

society but by viewing them as being controlled and directed by Jesus, the brethren offer the church life as an answer to the chaos in the secular world. Finally, from the standpoint of group participation, the change in slogans has the effect of maintaining a high level of enthusiasm. For once one slogan has been wrung dry, a new one is presented and with it new hymns which incorporate it into the entire meeting.

Friday

The Friday night prayer meetings are held at the Assembly Hall. Originally these were fast meetings at which individuals would not eat until Saturday to signify that the words of Jesus provide the individual with enough sustenance for existence. At the beginning of my stay, the name of the meeting was changed to Prayer Meeting (Dau Gau Jyu Hwei) and fasting was said to be only voluntary.

Usually about 20-30 brethren attend this meeting and spend the entire time (half an hour) in fervent prayer. There is no limit on subject matter. It was at one of these Friday night meetings that the brethren spent twenty minutes of the time praying for me to accept Jesus as my savior. Once the meeting ended, I was surrounded by the co-worker and several other male brethren who exhorted me to call on the name of Jesus and let His spirit enter my body. While they spoke to me,

on the opposite side of the room, the sisters sat smiling, answering each of the brother's statements (e.g., "don't use your mind to think about Jesus, use your spirit and call on his name") with cries of "Oh, Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!"

Once the church began weekly meetings of preaching the gospel at the park, much time was spent asking for Jesus to give them strength for success in gaining new converts. After the prayer meeting all brethren are encouraged to participate in this gospel preaching. The weather during these gospel meetings was seen as a sign of Jesus' protection. The brethren often noted that it never rained from 7:30-9:00 on Friday nights and several times it began sprinkling only after the final Amens, and the group had dispersed. Several times when Buddhist groups held meetings, it did rain during the week; but come Friday the sun was again shining for the Local Church's meeting. As an aside I might add that although I did not attend all of these meetings, I noted the weather and as the brethren said, it truly never rained on Friday nights during the time of their preaching.

Saturday

Saturday night meetings at the Assembly Hall are youth meetings. In the smaller student room, the junior middle school students meet, guided by high school graduates. In the larger Assembly Hall, high school and college-aged brethren

hold their meetings, led by one of the co-workers (usually the sister who had graduated from college only four years previously). Often young people from Assembly Hall #3 meet with those at #8 and refreshments are served after the meeting. (In the case of the youth meeting at #3, the brethren first divided into smaller groups according to jya to read the Bible and then congregated for a larger meeting to sing hymns and give testimonies.) The format for these meetings is the same as those of the adults; but here the youth are given the opportunity to discuss problems related to their own lives. The following testimonies exemplify the types of subjects revealed in these meetings:

I did very poorly on a school test; then I came to church and found Jesus so everything has a good point.

We love our parents and listen to them. Likewise, we must love Jesus and listen to Him.

When I heard the church message about Jesus' return, I didn't believe it. Today I caught a cold and went home and wanted to rest but everything went wrong. I quarrelled with my mother and went into my room. There I sang a hymn about our being saved when Jesus comes. I slept and when I woke up, I felt better. Now I believe Jesus will return.

At the beginning of the school year, someone asked for all Christians to raise their hands to participate in meetings with other Christians. At first we (two sisters) didn't know what to do because the Local Church has its own meetings. But we signed up and saw that some sisters from #8 had also done so while others had not. Later we were told that we could go and compare the meetings with our own while at the same time preaching the gospel in these meetings.

In the fall of 1972, the elders and co-workers decided that more communication should take place between the generations and that older brethren should attend Saturday night meetings more regularly. In speaking with younger brethren after this announcement, I noticed the lack of enthusiasm for their meetings being attended by older brethren. They felt that many young people would be reluctant to express themselves freely in front of adults. Hence, despite attendance at these meetings by some older brethren, it was erratic and the attempt to bring brethren of all ages together (in line with the view that we are all one family) was accomplished at the Eighth Assembly Hall in name only.

In summary, the variety of meetings and the fact that they are held nightly (with additional ones often scheduled during the week) reflects the brethren's concern for keeping all members involved in the church life and thus detracting from the potential danger of returning to the outside world to satisfy one's recreational and emotional needs. The hoped-for effect is that the young people and adults who spend much of their time working or studying in an environment not under the control of the church can continually get spiritual transfusions during all free time. Once the individual begins to view the church as his home and the other brethren as trusted family members, he is subjected to social pressure to conform

to certain standards of behavior that will distinguish him from those outside the church. Hence, these meetings may be seen as part of an overall strategy by which the individual is incorporated into the Local Church life.

CHAPTER VI

MODELS OF THOUGHT REFORM

While the last chapter concerned the church's utilization of social contacts and networks as well as religious and social activities to keep new members within the church grounds, this chapter will turn to the effect of the atmosphere and ritual of the church meetings in bringing the individual's perceptions of his world in line with those in the church's world view. Here I am considering that facet of the religious dialectic--internalization--which not only directs the brethren's roles and patterns of behavior but allows the brethren to see them as being natural and spontaneous, this being a key distinction they make between their own and other churches. Present also within a variety of Christian fundamentalist churches in the United States and Great Britain, this process of internalization involves features which are similar to thought reform on mainland China. There, too, ideology may be considered as a communication system in which an individual must acquire correct categories and language in order to correlate his own view with that of the group. Once this is done, the individual has incorporated rational tools for carrying out actions within the group (Schurmann,

1968, 4). Since I am contending that ritual forms in the Local Church meetings are being used as ideology, my analysis of the symbolism of these forms is requisite to understanding the church's attempts to guide the individual's internalization of its world view and norms for behavior. First, I would like to focus attention on the general features of thought reform in mainland China as noted by Lifton (1961), further considering them in the specific case of the Local Church.

While the process of thought reform for the Local Church is complicated because of the inability to physically restrict members' movements and enforce their participation in group activities, its features remain essentially the same as those utilized on the mainland. In both cases thought reform involves teaching the individual to accept the total world view of the group. In the case of the mainland, thought reform consists of two basic elements: "confession, the exposure and renunciation of past and present evil; and reeducation, the remaking of a man in the Communist image." (Lifton, 1961) In the case of the Local Church, at the time of baptism one is told that he or she is shedding the old self and becoming a new man or woman. From this point on, the individual is involved in a developmental process of spiritual growth; in testimonies, as he confesses his past errors and interprets his experiences in the context of the group's world view, he slowly learns

to channel all his life's activities as Jesus would desire, i.e., in the church family. (For a further comparison between the Local Church and the situation on mainland China, see Afterword.)

Lifton's essential conditions for thought reform provide a foundation for the material to be presented in this chapter (Lifton, 1961, 410-437):

I. Milieu control: control of human communication; this involves the attempts to limit the brethren's social arena to within the church; as noted in the last chapter, the member is expected to spend all his free time in church family activities.

II. Mystical manipulation: provoking "specific patterns of behavior and emotion in such a way that these will appear to have arisen spontaneously (Lifton, 1961, 422); ritual of the church meetings is seen as spontaneously forthcoming from the direction of Jesus' spirit.

III. Demand for purity: defining and manipulating the criteria for purity and then conducting an all-out war upon impurity (Lifton, 1961, 424); in defining purity in their world view, the brethren set up a closed system of logic in which every event can be seen as supportive of their faith. Thus, if an individual is ill, he should call out the name of Jesus. His recovery denotes the efficacy of the procedure. Should

he fail to recover, this suggests that he may be demanding that Jesus make him well rather than merely asking Him to do as He wishes. Aligned with this demand for purity is the need in thought reform for a defined enemy. In the church's case, it may be satanic forces in the outside world expressed in immoral behavior, or the chaotic conditions in world Christianity. References to these enemies are continuously evoked whereupon the all-out war upon impurity is conducted by the church members as Jesus' army, which attempts to defeat and absorb the enemy on the outside. One small two-day meeting for converting new members exemplifies such a process. On the first day, the enemy was defined: boredom and a general lack of fulfillment in one's life; inability to satisfy one's needs through dependence on economic gain and recreational pursuits; overall confusion of urban life. On the second day, the answer to the impurities of disorder was given: dependence on Jesus' spirit and living the church life.

IV. Cult of confession: making public everything about one's life experiences and forcing the individual to interpret those experiences in the context of the group's world view; importance placed on testimonies in the church meetings.

V. Sacred science: "unification of mystical and logical modes of experience" (Lifton, 1961, 428); Jesus' mystical involvement in one's life is seen as being substantiated scientifically

through experimentation. If an individual has problems in school, he is told to call on the name of Jesus. Solution of these problems during this experience is regarded as inductive proof that the faith can be logically supported.

VI. Loading the language: use of particular jargon to express unity and exclusiveness as well as direct the interpretation of experience; the brethren use a special vocabulary which not only distinguishes them from non-Christian Chinese but also connotes certain meaning into their experience.

VII. Doctrine over person: subordination of human experience to claims of doctrine; shift between experience itself and the highly abstract interpretation of such experience (Lifton 430); the individual has little meaning outside the context of the church and thus each of the individual's experiences has significance only in the context of the group's overall world view.

VIII. Dispensing of existence: there is only one path to true existence, only one valid mode of being; all others are invalid and false (Lifton, 1961, 434); in the church, truth is to be found only within the spirit of Jesus and its earthly manifestation, the church family.

Each of the above features is evident in the ritual of the church meetings. The term RITUAL will be used here to refer to set patterns which symbolize ideal relationships

consistent with the Local Church's world view. The important features of the brethren's view of life within the church-- spontaneity, harmony, unity, and subservience to Jesus' spirit-- all are reinforced in ritual patterns of the church meetings. Considering the meetings as a whole, the rapid flow from prayer to hymn to testimony points to the brethren's allowing the service to move spontaneously as the spirit directs; all members should feel free to express themselves without perceiving the imposition of a service routine. Because each meeting revolves around one theme, unity and harmony of all church brethren is reinforced. The constant AMENS in response to testimonies reflect the fact so often stressed that all speak with one voice within the church. The image of the church meetings as feasts is also suggestive of their symbolic importance as ritual. In the traditional Chinese home, the father's association with the kitchen god can be viewed as expressing his superiority within the structure of the family (Freedman, 1970, 174). Family meals themselves thus become formats for supporting his structural dominance. Likewise, the church meetings are often described as feasts in which Jesus' spirit, once ingested, directs the responses.

This analogy of a family feast may provide at the outset an overall framework with which to view local church meetings. Terminology of the church supports the fact that the members

themselves perceive their meetings as partaking in the spirit of Jesus to provide sustenance necessary for existence. Certain meetings (love feasts, prayer fast, e.g.) explicitly relate to this analogy. In addition, specific terms used to describe the meetings have the connotation of eating: Chr he ju (eat and drink the Lord) is used to describe the pray-reading process. Appetite (kou wei, 胃口) for the Lord's works, the good taste of these words (wei dau hau, 味道好), and complete satisfaction derived (Wo chr bau, 我吃飽 : I have eaten until full)—all are everyday Chinese expressions used to describe pleasure with the content of the church service. The analogy of eating was carried to its extreme by Witness Lee who in one special meeting referred to the process of pray-reading as cutting up Jesus into small pieces like a piece of meat and ingesting them so they may become a part of one's own essence. Thus, Jesus is the supply (gung ying, 供應) for the feast and the members communicate in conversations relating to the nature of this supply. Overall, the service conjures up the image of family members gathering to share their sustenance provided by Jesus and communicating with other family members. The brethren as members of a family relate their problems in testimonies, the answers to which come in spiritual revelations from the family head, Jesus.

Before examining each of the features of the church meeting-- prayer, hymns, prayer-reading and testimonies--I shall first present a detailed transcript of one such meeting which will provide a basis for future discussion:

In the main assembly hall, between the conclusion of classes and the start of the adult meeting at 10:30 Sunday morning, a few brethren begin to pray together and are soon joined by the elder, co-workers, and several jya fu dze (each week a different jya is responsible for leading in recitation of biblical passages and singing hymns) who have been meeting in a small room to discuss the format of the meeting and to pray together for its success. As more of the brethren begin to arrive, the prayers reach a more feverish pitch: "May we all receive Jesus; praise the Lord; we are inside You; You are within us; You give us eternal life"--each exclamation interspersed with Amens and calling out the name of the Lord so that there will be no silent pauses to break the rhythm of the prayers.

The prayers subside as the co-worker motions to a young brother to rise and begin in leading a hymn: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ, my righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand." (hymn # 238). The brethren sing together and then the student asks that the brothers sing, then sisters, and sits down as various groups rise to sing particular verses of the hymn. A brother rises and announces that we are to pray-read Romans 8:1-2: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The brethren then begin to pray-read the passage, calling out and repeating phrase by phrase the content of the hymn: "For the law of the spirit (repeat); for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (repeat); hath made me free (repeat); from the law of sin and death; hath

made me free from the law of sin and death; we are free from sin and death; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made us free from sin and death (different groups and individuals repeat this phrase); together loudly, with emphasis on each word: FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HATH MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH!

A sister calls out the number of hymn #229 and we begin to sing: I am in Christ Jesus and away from Adam; all old matters become new; all words and belongings become heaven; praise the Lord, I get peace and fullness in my life; praise the Lord; praise the Lord, I am in you." Another brother rises and II Corinthians 5:17 is read and prayed in a pattern similar to the previous selection: Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

Now there are short testimonies, quickly following each other: I am newly created (brother); everything becomes old when time is passing, except in Christ Jesus where one remains new forever (sister); to be in Christ is not limited by time and space (brother); a new creature is a man of hope, a new creature is the son of God, the old creature is dead (brother); a woman referring to Galatians 5:22-23 declares that the "new creature who has love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (sister). Quickly following her, a co-worker (sister) has found a related hymn (#110) and the brethren sing: "Joyful now the new creation, rests in undisturbed repose, blest in Jesus' full salvation, sorrow now nor thralldom knows."

At this point the elder rises: we are often happy when we have good luck and sad when we have bad luck. But we would always be happy if we live in Christ. Because a new creature cares not about the change of conditions. If we compare the former with the condition after our salvation, we would know the difference between the old and new creatures. Another brother rises and goes to the center: after work I should return home right away. But when I saw the oranges that looked so fresh I bought them. Getting home, I saw they were rotten

because I was my own master instead of letting Jesus be my master. Before the brother sits down, someone has called out small hymnal #136, and the harshness of the spoken voice is replaced by melody: "When I am happy, I say loudly, o, my Lord; when you praise the Lord be cheerful no matter when, where, in darkness or in light; you will be blessed."

Then a sister rises: I want to be relieved only in Christ. Having a shower under the light of the Holy Spirit, I became a new creature. I would not be grievous; if only I could live completely away from my flesh. A brother testifies about a recent experience which pointed to the value of living in the Lord: I was riding a bicycle, passing between a truck and a ditch. Suddenly, the truck started. I cried out to the Lord, and though I fell down I was not hurt. Whenever I call upon Him, He is with me. Nothing is impossible to Him. Along this same line, a young sister relates: It was late Saturday night after the youth meeting. I got on the wrong bus with other sisters. After getting off, we did not know what to do. We prayed and called on the name of the Lord. The bus finally came. We thanked God. The conductress wondered and asked us why. We told her that the Lord is in us. She smiled and said she too belonged to the local church of Yilan. O, Lord, Amen Hallelujah!

A young brother rose and read II Corinthians 3:14: "but their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ." He continued, there was an assembly at Jya 27; all of us were gloomy not knowing how to start. We just walked around and sang: "Change, change, we are changing..." Sadness will change into happiness. The long face will become round. The grace of the Lord is abundant. It can't be described in words. Just praise Jesus then more and more people came to the meeting.

The meeting having gone on for about an hour now, the co-worker moves to the podium. In clear standard Mandarin (for he is from the Peking area) he summarizes and adds to the basic theme already discussed: "The

church is God's family. One who thinks the church is an uncomfortable family must be abnormal. In this family we can come back to the spirit and enjoy the freedom of being God's children; most of the people think that the church is a sacrosanct place and one has to join it. This is wrong. It is a family of the living God, free and natural. The members of the family have mutual burdens of opening the feeling of God's family so that the Lord can rest within and the spirit can reside freely...The Bible says the Lord will be coming; this means He will be back home, not coming from His home. He is out fighting Satan's power and He will win with honor."

While remaining standing, the co-worker begins the final prayer: "O, Lord, the church is God's family... Thank the Lord, for sadness will become happiness..." The other brethren begin to call out their prayers and the co-worker sits down: "we reside in God's family...the spirit resides in us...we are all new creatures..." After a few minutes of prayer, the deacon rises and announces the various activities of the forthcoming week and we all begin to leave the Assembly Hall.....

One of the criticisms leveled against the Local Church by other Christians is that such meetings as the preceding—interspersed with constant cries of Amen, Hallelujah, and O, Lord—take on a carnival atmosphere that lacks the reverence necessary in the house of the Lord (in contrast to the secular world). Such criticism is answered by church brethren on both a spiritual and practical level. In the first instance, as the spirit of Jesus is continuously giving new inspirations and feelings to the brethren, the form of the meetings must be free and spontaneous. The Local Church brethren consider a good meeting

to be one in which Jesus' spirit is not only present but is in complete control of directing the service. His control is manifested in the unity of the meeting, in the above example shown by the theme, "old creature becomes new creature," threaded throughout the service.

On a practical level, church brethren who have attended other Christian services have expressed their boredom at these meetings. At the Local Church, because they all can participate, the spiritual aspect of the meetings is combined with enjoyment necessary if members are to have all of their needs met within the church. Laughter in response to testimonies, games of attempting to recite biblical passages from memory, refreshments served after the meetings--all serve to make the brethren feel that within the church all of their needs, spiritual, emotional, and recreational, can be satisfied.

A question that arises is the means by which church brethren cope with the apparent contradiction between the view of the church's sacredness vis-a-vis the outside world and the incorporation of the boisterousness of that world into its service. One young church leader noted that in order to bring and keep young people in the church, the church must be able to relate to the latter's experiences in the outside world. The rambunctious nature of the meetings enhances an easier transition for new members by supplying them with the pleasure they must eschew

beyond church grounds. The contrast of the church to the world outside is thus derived from the source of their activities: Satan and the spirit of Jesus respectively. Because of the source, while the FORMAT of church services is boisterous and gay, the CONTENT of the church life derived from Jesus is described as pure in contrast to the uncleanness of the outside world.

In totality this tone of church meetings seemed important in facilitating the thought reform of the individual. I have previously suggested that the meeting itself serves as an experience in asserting the ability of Jesus and the church to cope with life's uncertainties. It does so first by simulating the uncontrolled fast-changing pace of urban life; then by emphasizing the presence of Jesus' spirit, the form of the meeting symbolizes that only His spirit can help the individual overcome any chaos in his environment.

Moreover, the process of teaching brethren the "how" to perform in meetings is made easier by the fact that each aspect has its counterpart to a feature in Taiwan's present-day culture familiar to the brethren. Among these (to be expounded on in the following pages) are popular songs (church hymn melodies); preparation for school examinations (prayer-reading) and diaries written for school (testimonies).

THE RITUAL OF CHURCH MEETINGS

Prayer

All meetings, whatever their size and purpose begin and end with prayer. The opening prayer allows the members to quickly define their presence in a sacred environment. The brethren described the purposes of the initial prayer as several: praising Jesus and asking Him to be present at the meeting; letting Satan know that they are with Jesus; and opening up communication Channels with the Lord (described as being similar to dialing a phone and saying "hello" before a conversation can begin). Loud and vocal prayer is viewed as a prerequisite to destroying the powers of the mind and relinquishing complete control to Jesus' spirit. Furthermore, although individual prayer is encouraged, it is seen as inferior in strength to the force of group prayer. By praying with one's brothers and sisters in a stream of consciousness fashion (as shown below), the image of the Church speaking with one voice, directed by the spirit of Jesus, is supported in ritual. The following example of prayer supplies an illustration that the major theme of the initial prayer is to set the tone for the subsequent meeting by praising Jesus and unswervingly stating subservience to His control. Moreover, while individuals singly call out short phrases in the prayer, the continuous flow from one member to another gives the feeling that the prayer is emanating from one voice; the organic whole of the church body thus becomes

in perception to the existence of its individual cells.

You are together with us/together with us and our meeting is thus rich/truly there is enjoyment/ praise You/the Lord's spirit is in our spirit; only then are we free/Oh, Lord, wherever you are, there there is spirit; lord, wherever you are, there there is freedom/You are with us, then the meeting has supply/praise You because You are the spirit/Lord, thank You, praise You because Your words often inside us; Oh, Lord Jesus/Because You are in the spirit, always open our spirit/release our spirit/because You open our spirit, we come to receive You, we want to be a vessel, to be the Lord's vessel/release our spirit, release Your living words/O, Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus/O Lord Jesus You gather us together to release Your words/thank the Lord, You give us eternal life, give us spirit; Lord, thank and praise You, today's meeting is completely in Your hands, help us all receive eternal life, all get supply/praise You, Your supply, Your life is really rich/Hallelujah, we get the things He releases, Lord Jesus is in us, we are all in Your hands/this is a release meeting, release You, here we release You/release ourselves, only then can eternal life grow. Only then can we be in spirit and give evidence/we are in spirit, break away from Religion, break away from regulations, so that the meeting will be released.

The free-flowing form of group prayer signifies the spontaneous effect of Jesus' spirit on the group's unity and harmony.

There are no pauses-Amen, Hallelujah, and O Ju a (Oh, Lord) supply the conjunctions creating a total group prayer from a series of individual ones. Words or phrases called out by one of the brethren are repeated and developed further by others. The members' structural relation to Jesus and the close nature of the group community is thus symbolized at the outset in prayer and the meeting continues under the direction of His spirit.

The final prayer is contrasted to that of the initial one by the nature of its content. As apparent from the example of the church meeting given at the beginning of the chapter, it provides a summary of the subjects discussed in the prayer-reading and testimonies. By providing such a summary in the same group form, the brethren thus substantiate the satisfaction and agreement regarding the revelations of the meetings.

Hymns

In the preface to the English edition of the Local Church's hymnal, Witness Lee and an American co-worker, John Ingalls, state the purpose of the hymns:

Christian hymns and songs are the expression of the holy and spiritual sentiments of the saints formed by their experiences in Christ, their knowledge of God and His truth, and their appreciation, praise, and thanksgiving to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They are necessary both for Christian meetings and for Christian private life in order to fulfill the following purpose:

- 1) To worship God the Father
- 2) To praise the Lord Jesus Christ
- 3) To edify the saints
- 4) To build up the Church
- 5) To fight the spiritual warfare
- 6) To preach the Gospel

The hymns of the Local Church are quite distinguishable from those of other Christian groups. The name by which the group was known on the mainland by other Christians, Little Flock (Syau Chyun, 小群) was derived from their calling their hymnal, the Little Flock Hymnal after that used by the Exclusive

Brethren. After the split in 1966, Witness Lee made fundamental changes in the organization and content of the hymnals, both of which had direct effect on the use of the hymns within the service. In the first place, the previously used large hymnal was reorganized according to subjects; among them: worship of the Father, praise of the Lord, union with Christ, experience of God, study of the Word, service, baptism, gospel. More important, in addition to the large hymnal, the church began to compile a small hymnal, initially composed of hymns written by brethren in the United States and translated into Chinese. The main features which distinguish the small hymnal from the large are the simplicity of the language used and the tune to which these hymns are written. Even without a knowledge of Chinese or an understanding of Christian terminology, an observer is at once struck by hearing popular melodies such as "Coming Around the Mountain" and "Yellow Submarine" in the church service. To this small hymnal the brethren are continuously adding new hymns. From December 1971, until the end of my stay one year later, the small hymnal grew from 62 to 220 hymns.

Reference to Witness Lee's own words suggests reasons for the reorganization of the large hymnal and proliferation of hymns in the smaller volume (Hymnal, vi.):

In the way of the Lord's recovery, the Church's knowledge of the Lord and His truth is progressing daily and new discoveries are continually being made by the saints in the spiritual experiences. Though the hymns and songs composed in the past are many, and not a few are masterpieces, yet they have not attained to the present phase of the Lord's recovery and in many respects are not adequate to meet the advanced need of the day.

The key phrases in this explanation are "His truth is progressing daily" and the fact noted that many hymns "are not adequate to meet the advanced need of the day." Both of these have been mentioned as facets of both the Exclusive Brethren and the Local Church. The church must be able to relate to the changes in the urban environment while at the same time giving them meaning in the context of the church view that one can only be protected from the chaos of modern life within the church family. Thus, while the form (i.e., melodies) of hymns may be similar to that of the outside world, the context is strictly spiritual. Thus, particularly for younger brethren, such hymns link the church meetings to their experiences in the outside world.

The use of hymns within the Local Church is consistent with the group's view of itself vis-a-vis the realms of denominational Christianity and the secular life. To reiterate the distinction, the brethren view their own meetings as spontaneous responses directed by the spirit of Jesus. Thus, the reorganization of the large hymnal according to particular

themes allows brethren to find a hymn related to the topic of the meeting and call out its number at any point in the service, thus maintaining the atmosphere of the meeting as a feverish conversation tied together thematically by the revelations of Jesus' spirit. This is seen in contrast to the pattern of denominational Christian services in which a hymn is chosen by the presiding minister and sung at particular points in the church meeting. In the Local Church, however, all brethren can suggest hymns to be sung as they are inspired to do so; Jesus' direction of the church meeting, manifested in such inspirations, thus takes predominance over prearranged rational selections of man. Furthermore, the writing of hymns by individual brethren offers an enjoyable outlet for individual expression. Several times, brethren at the Eighth Assembly Hall rose to sing hymns which they had composed themselves after reading a particular biblical passage. The hymns thus emphasize the desire for participation by all members in the church life. The importance for enjoying the church meeting must also not be underestimated. A young leader contrasted the catchy tunes to what he called the staid and boring traditional hymns used in denominational Christianity and emphasized their role in drawing the youth to enjoy church meetings.

While the large church hymnal, compiled from hymns written

over the ages by a variety of Christians of all sects and denominations, expresses general spiritual themes which the Local Church deems common to all Christians, the small hymnal gives expression to a variety of specific themes developed within the Local Church. These themes relate both to the brethren's view of life within the church and to the particular ritual of the church meeting. The following hymns exemplify the elaboration of church life in metaphorical terms:

The Lord lives inside me #31
Everyone is in the Home/Family #56
The Restoration of the Church #34
Today I have the Place Church #76
We are unified #166
Hallelujah, Freedom #208
Place Church is a Lovely Church #134
Enjoy, Build, and Fight #200

In these eight hymns, we find a summary of the view that church members have toward their group; restoration of the church reflects the idea of the failure of the Christian denominations to meet the ideals of scriptural Christianity; the church as family with all members unified and free; the need to enjoy, build, and fight (as Jesus' army) adapts the metaphors of family and army to music. Finally, the recognition that "Jesus lives in me" emphasizes the control of all human behavior by Him.

A second group of hymns relates to the ritual of the church service:

Change, change, change #143
Say, Oh Lord!"
O, Lord; Amen; Hallelujah #22
You come to eat #36

Christ, Christ is really good to eat #174
Call out: Oh, Jesus #61
Say Amen Again #130
Amen the Words of God #141
We come to enjoy #209
Let the spirit be free #185
The Lord lets me see #204

The church service is filled with cries of Amen and Hallelujah and calling to the Lord, aspects added to church ritual after the split in 1966 and expressed in the above hymns. Eating the words of Jesus symbolically expressed the process of prayer-reading the biblical passages. "The Lord lets me see" is most commonly heard in testimonies in which Jesus teaches and directs an individual by confronting him with particular experiences in his daily life. Finally, the ultimate goals of the church service--enjoyment and freedom of the spirit (reflected in the spontaneity of the meetings) is expressed in the hymns "We come to enjoy" and "Let the Spirit be Free." In this same vein, the hymn "Change, change, change" serves to emphasize another purpose of the hymns. The simple words of this hymn combined with the use of a Chinese children's melody stress the importance of being like children directed by the father (Jesus) within the church. In addition to the children's melody, hand movements were added and brethren of all ages were encouraged to perform the hymn (despite the initial embarrassment of some of the older brethren).

A temporal overview of the names of hymns in the small

hymnal gives a clear idea of the changes of themes within the church and supports the characteristic feature which differentiates the Local Church from other Christian groups. As noted by Witness Lee in the preceding passage and by many of the other brethren, this characteristic is an emphasis on progress or change. As one brother succinctly put it: "People like and need change!" At each special assembly, there are new hymns presented; following the conclusion of these meetings, these and other hymns are added to the church repertoire. As an example, the hymn "Changing" was added after Lee's special meeting in October of 1972 in which he emphasized the need to change oneself completely within the church.

The compilation of the small hymnal is done by a small group of co-workers who work at the First Assembly Hall in Taipei; they both print the hymns in the small hymnals and make corrections deemed necessary by Lee in the larger hymnal. I became aware of this latter process one day when speaking to the co-worker in charge of hymns. At that time he was making changes in all hymns of the large hymnal in which the phrase "erdz dzai ling" (the son is in the spirit) was used. This was modified to "erdz shr ling" (the son is the spirit, 兒子是靈) to conform to the church view that the most active and meaningful feature in church life today is the spirit which reflects the wishes of the Son. Interestingly enough, this placement of the Spirit above the Son in the Christian trinity has been

attacked by those who broke with Lee as an example of the latter's heretical ideas (Shr , et. al., 1970).

In summary, the hymns must be viewed as a facet of the total church ritual which symbolizes the world view that the church body is a manifestation of the unity and harmony of Christ. Both the format of the hymnals and their content enhance such a perception. In the case of the format, the reorganization of hymns in the large hymnal according to themes allows their easy incorporation into the service. Moreover, in cases where testimonies of individuals stray from the original theme of the meeting, a co-worker may call out a related hymn, subtly bringing the meeting back to its original purpose without interfering with the ideal that Jesus, not man, is directing the flow of the meeting. Even the procedure for singing the hymns supports the idea of unity and harmony: if a group of brethren rise to sing one hymn, other small groups will be moved to follow suit, supporting the notion that "within the church, we speak with one voice." Also, as in a traditional Chinese banquet where individuals show their ties to others by asking them to drink a toast, in the spiritual feast of the church meeting, an individual may invite another to sing with him.

Finally, in the case of the small hymnal, the proliferation of hymns bolsters the view that Jesus' truth is progressing daily and thus nourishing the growth of eternal life within

the church. The content of these hymns directly relates to the themes of spontaneity, unity, harmony, and freedom expressed in the world view. In verbalizing ritual forms such as calling out the name of the Lord, crying out Amen and Hallelujah and eating His words, these hymns not only provide a continuity between biblical passages, testimonies and prayer, but also an atmosphere within which the preceding can take place.

Prayer-reading

The church brethren view the chaos and disunity in the secular world and denominational Christianity as being derived from the individual's dependence on his own impulses—whether those of the flesh or those of the rational mind. The solution to this situation is the complete subordination of the individual will to the designs of the spirit of Jesus. Once the mind has been emptied through prayer and calling out the name of Jesus, it must be filled with the spirit, manifested in biblical passages representing the Lord's words. The ultimate achievement is that the innermost of the three concentric circles of the church's world, the SPIRIT, thus gains control over the other two. The previous two aspects of church ritual, prayer and hymns, serve the purpose of breaking down the mind's control over the other two. The previous two aspects of church ritual, prayer and hymns, serve the purpose of breaking

down the mind's control over thought and behavior (the releasing of pressure or "chi" as noted by one elder); a vacuum is created which can be filled by the spirit of Jesus. The characteristics of spiritual control are seen to be unity and harmony of the church body and spontaneity of the church meeting. The biblical passage chosen to be pray-read provides a foundation for allowing the entire church meeting to satisfy these characteristics.

Lee, in a short pamphlet, Pray-Reading the Word (n.d., 7) describes the process:

Simply pick up the Word and pray-read a few verses in the morning and in the evening. There is no need for you to exercise your mind in order to squeeze out some utterance, and it is unnecessary to think over what you read...For example, in pray-reading Galatians 2:20 simply look at the printed page, which says, "I am crucified with Christ." Then with your eyes upon the Word and praying from deeply within say: "Praise the Lord, 'I am crucified with Christ. Amen! I am. O, Lord, I am crucified. Praise the Lord! Crucified with Christ....'"

This process of prayer-reading (dau du, 禱讀) has two functions. In the first place, the biblical verse supplies the nourishment for the meeting, i.e., the dominant theme on which subsequent testimonies, hymns, and final prayer will be based. The effect is that the meeting moves along in a stream of consciousness fashion yet with a central idea on which all the brethren can focus. The result is that all brethren are seen to speak with one voice--expressing in the church body the unity and harmony characteristic of the spirit of Jesus. The importance of pray-reading for creating this unity

was revealed by a co-worker who had come late to one of the small home meetings. When asked to share her feelings with the other sisters, she declined stating that as she had not participated in pray-reading, she would be unable to relate her feelings as directed by the spirit of Jesus.

In addition to this first function of providing the link in the entire church meeting there is the more personal one of allowing brethren to learn the spiritual words so that they can use them in their everyday lives. Thus, the repetition of passages is seen as a means to aid the brethren in memorization. Moreover, the swaying to and fro combined with repeated vocalization of particular verses is reminiscent of scenes of traditional Chinese learning processes revealed in movies. Here the student, in preparing for his studies, walks back and forth, calling out his lessons, oblivious to the world around him. On my visit to a high school, I also viewed students before their classes pacing in the hallways, loudly repeating their lessons. Memorization in traditional China and modern Taiwan is a prime means in education. Thus, as in the case of the melodies of the hymns, the brethren can also easily adapt to this process in the church.

Prayer-reading takes on the form of a conversation among brethren. The vocabulary is supplied by the verse; after each individual exhortation the entire assembly voices its AMEN. As

is the case with the hymns, one or more individuals may invite others to read with them, expressing a unity under the aegis of Jesus' words. There are two stages, defined by the group as sywan du (public reading) and dau du (prayer reading).

The former is the complete reading of the passage in group unison. As an example of both is the reading of John 15:1-10 taken from a meeting on June 27, 1972:

- I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser
- 2 Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit
- 3 You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you
- 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me
- 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do neither.
- 6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.
- 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
- 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.
- 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love
- 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

After the public reading, the brethren begin to pray-read the individual verses:

Oh, Lord, You are the real vine, You are real not
false; praise the Lord/
I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser
You are the vine/we are the branch; we want to bear
fruit; If we can't bear fruit, we will be cut off

We want to live in You; we must live in You; then we
can bear fruit;
Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear
fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless you abide in Me
Lord, we can bear fruit, if useless, You fix us
Cleanse us and we will be able to bear fruit; we may
have many places that the Lord doesn't like and
will be cleansed by You and we will live in You
and You in us; our heart then will be more clean
and we will bear more fruit; accept our prayer
You are the vine, we are the branches. He who abides
in You and he it is that bears much fruit, for apart
from You we can do nothing.
If we depend on self, we are not able to receive or
preach
If we don't live in You, we will wander in the world;
Your words give us revelation; Christians live
in the church; we are Your children and live in
Your House and then You will be happy
We ask You to save us; we are Your disciples and want
to follow Your road
Your words are in us; O Lord we are so fortunate; if
we abide in You, we will bear fruit and make
brothers and sisters live in You
Your love is like a father loves us
You give us whatever we want; we need to bear fruit
more and receive many times
All of the Bible is the Lord's commandments; live in
His love; we will be in You and You in us, and we
will be able to love each other.

In the above example of prayer-reading, two processes are in-
volved. The first is the repetition of verses--in large meetings
one verse may be repeated out loud for as long as five minutes.
This symbolizes the process referred to as to "eat and drink
the Lord" (chr he ju, 吃, 喝 主); the Lord's words are ingested,
replacing the thoughts and emotions emanating from the human
mind. Moreover, in the case of prayer-reading a large passage

(as above), the verses are digested and given meaning in a practical context. Thus, the pronouns may be reversed (e.g., "I am the vine, you are the branches" becomes "You are the vine, we are the branches") as an expression of complete agreement with the meaning of the passage. Finally, the Amens and Hallelujahs at the conclusion of each phrase serve to punctuate the unity of the brethren within the church and the unity of the church with Jesus.

Testimonies

Following the prayer-reading, individual brethren rise and, either standing in place or moving to the center aisle, relate their inspirations gained from the meeting. Three terms are used to describe the revelations offered by the brethren: jiau tung (communication); dzwo jyan jeng (give testimony or witness); and fen syang (sharing). Below are descriptions provided by the female co-worker at the Eighth Assembly Hall as well as examples of each.

JYAU TUNG (交通): relating experiences as helpful lessons to other brethren
My husband died long ago and I was left to rear five children. I loved the world and played mah-jongg constantly. One night I was sick and spit up blood. I asked Jesus to help. Because He loved me, He forgave me and then I started coming to church.

JYAN JENG (見證): giving proof of truth of the Bible through revelation of experiences; directly related to biblical passage or hymn.
Romans 8:33-Who shall bring any charge against God's

elect?...Romans 8:37-No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Today I don't see old Brother Lai because he, being 70, fell down last Wednesday. But his bones were not broken. We here see the powerful hand of God protected him. Also, today I received a letter this morning in which XX told me that he was hit by his army officer. I told my wife that this person loves the Lord so much that Satan gave him a shock. But we can see that one who loves the Lord and believes in Him is a conqueror.

FEN SYANG (分享): commenting on the meaning of biblical passages read during the meeting so that all may gain better understanding and share in the light of the biblical truths.

Hebrews 3:6-But Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope. I Timothy 3:15-... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

The church is God's family. If anyone feels the church is an uncomfortable family, he is abnormal. In this family, we can come back to spirit and enjoy the freedom of being God's children; most of the people think that church is a grace, a sacrosanct place and it is difficult to join. This is wrong. It is a family of the living God, free and convenient. The members of the family have mutual burdens of opening the feeling of God's family in which the Lord can rest... The Bible says the Lord will be coming. This means that he will be back home, not coming from his home. He is out fighting Satan's power and he will win with honor. (1/9/72)

While the fen syang is clearly differentiated from the other two categories, it is necessary to emphasize the distinction between jyan jeng and jyau tung. In the former case, the experience of the individual is seen as giving evidence to the truth of a particular biblical passage and hence the inclusion of the latter is an essential part of the testimony. In the

case of jyau tung, most often the brethren will begin by stating "Jesus has given me a feeling" or "Jesus has let me see in my circumstances..." This expresses the need to depend on Jesus in meeting every situation and the individual continues to show how this process was applied to a particular case. Because all three types are intermingled during the meeting, the distinction between the actual function of jyau tung and jyan jeng is blurred under the general guise of relating one's experiences in a spiritual context in order to show the positive result from complete subservience to the Lord's will. Thus, for the purpose of this section, the term "testimony" will be used to refer to either of these types.

The expressed purposes of testimonies is to give proof of the truth of Jesus' words; furthermore, in suggesting solutions to problems, one helps other brethren who may find themselves in similar situations. The elder at the Eighth Assembly Hall expressed his idea that such testimonies can be considered scientific conclusions derived from experiment. Thus, when his wife fell ill, he searched in his own home for the cause; upon destruction of chopsticks decorated with dragons, his wife recovered. Thus, the truth that within one's home only Jesus' spirit should prevail and all other evil spirits must be destroyed (in this case in the form of dragons associated with the serpent in the Garden of Eden.) "Medical" testimonies

also follow this pattern: one brother with a bandage covering his neck described how he had almost died from an infection. Doctors had prescribed medicines but his illness continued to get worse until all hope was gone. Finally, a brother told him to call the name of the Lord and continuously pray for relief. After several months of illness, his fever suddenly subsided and he began to get well. The lesson: one can depend only on the Lord (rather than man). Moreover, other brethren with minor or major physical problems were also shown the efficacy of prayer and calling on the Lord.

In the wider context of the entire meeting the testimonies serve to reinforce the view of the unity of the spirit within the church. They are tied together by the thematic bond of the previously prayer-read biblical passages. The individual experience or inspiration is given meaning in a broader group scope. The testimonies tend to generalize the particular circumstances of each of the brethren and thus help place the individual in the context of the group, which offers its AMENs during and after the speaker's testimony. These AMENs manifest the group's identification with the personal revelation and offer encouragement to the more hesitant brethren by diminishing the latter's nervousness in speaking publicly.

Like the hymns and prayer-readings, the testimonies also have their counterpart in outside society. In the schools,

students are required to discuss experiences of the previous week in digests read and graded by a teacher. These short essays often concern particular personal or school problems and their solutions. In reviewing several of the notebooks of one high school student, I found a pattern emerging that is similar to that in church testimonies: first, a problem or situation is stated; then, the student shows how the problem is overcome by correct standards acceptable in general society or the church (in the case of testimonies):

School started over a week ago. Although I have been studying every night, I cannot concentrate on my reading. To encourage me, mother always says that in a few days I will get used to it. I really appreciate my mother and now my daily life is becoming normal.

In the history class on Saturday, we were very noisy before the teacher arrived. When the teacher came and found out, he gave us an exam unexpectedly. That was our fault. From now on, we should be careful not to be noisy before the teacher arrives.

We had two and a half days of vacation last week; I really didn't know how to spend those days. I originally planned to work but did not do so. Now that I look back and ask myself what I have done and read, I feel ashamed of myself. I hope that this will not happen again.

It was my turn to wax the floor this week. Since I have never done so before, I was not serious in waxing the floor. As a result, I was too slow. Not only did my classmates not accuse me of being too slow, they helped me wax the floor and they were very serious in working. I feel ashamed. I want to learn from them.

In the case of both digests and testimonies, a means is provided to interpret individual experiences in the context of the group's world view and elaborate this world view into a pragmatic means for future use. To this extent, the testimonies provide the procedure for allowing the brethren to make their cosmos humanly significant. The testimonies are important in interpreting and legitimating specific social processes that serve to maintain an ongoing faith in the reality of this social world. As noted before, because the brethren come into contact daily with the secular world, there is a constant need to place their experiences in this world in an order consistent with their world view. Those testimonies that involve placing one's experiences in the context of the group's world view take the overall form of the religious dialectic as defined by Berger:

When I was on the mainland I had a terrible temperament, gambled a lot and smoked. After I believed in Jesus and started to read the Bible, my temperament improved as the change took place naturally. If one keeps going to church, he will get rid of his bad habits as he can't do them there, but will keep busy with other things.

In the first sentence, the individual has stated an experience which has occurred in the past (i.e., bad temperament, smoking, gambling). Here he has described the externalization process, man acting on the world and its products. Next, he analyzes those aspects of this behavior that he deems meaningful with

regard to the ultimate results (objectification: perceiving the results or these actions as real entities): "After I believed in Jesus and started to read the Bible, my temperament improved as the change took place naturally..." Finally, he summarizes this activity as reflecting his need to depend on Jesus' power and how life in the church is superior to that in the outside world, all in accordance with the group's world view (internalization: reappropriating this reality into the overall world view): "If one keeps going to church..."

In making the world view of the church humanly significant, the past is given meaning in terms of the immediate religious experience of the church meeting. This gives a foundation for interpretation of all aspects of one's life in the context of the group's world view. Religion reflected thus is blended with religion experienced in the actual meeting. The situation described is first externalized, then objectified in terms of actual reality and finally reintegrated (internalized) into the scheme of order provided by the world view. Problems in the outside world--family relations, school, employment, army--are all discussed with the answer lying in the individual brethren's unswerving desire to depend on Jesus and live the church life:

In a brother's neighborhood one night there was a fire when he was not at home. All the homes were burned except his, for he believes in Jesus. We can depend on Jesus to take care of us.

I had a test last week and didn't do well. Because
x of this, I came to church and found Jesus and felt
better so everything has a good point.

x I was taking a test in English and couldn't think
of one answer. I prayed and the answer came to me.

I worked in the government bureaucracy and was given
a very nice home. When I returned, thank the Lord
that I was allowed to keep this home.

I was next to a man in the hospital who had cancer.
I tried to preach the gospel to him but he did not
hear. One day he fainted; upon awakening he said
that he had seen heaven and hell and wanted to be
baptized. Praise the Lord!

x Before I believed in Jesus, I used to fight often
with my wife. Now when I am angry, I call on the
Lord and all tension is released.

Moreover, as the testimonies themselves allow the individual
to place himself in a group context, the fact that in each
meeting they are summarized and internalized in terms of a
particular set theme reinforces the overall view that under
Jesus all the brethren speak as if with one voice and that
the church body is not merely a conglomeration of individuals
but rather an earthly manifestation of the unity and harmony
of Christ's body. This was substantiated in published trans-
criptions of testimonies in meetings of the Local Church held
in 1969 in Shih Lin, three examples of which I have included
in a footnote at the end of this chapter (Eberhard, 1972, 55-79).
Because the meeting is seen as directed by the spirit of Jesus,
members are thus able (in the words of the elder) to "empathize"
with each other rather than merely sympathize. One brethren's

pain is that of all the brethren; another's inspiration becomes that of the entire group. Thus, while outside the church individuals are single units, within the church they blend into an organic whole. The unifying force for the testimonies, as well as the entire service, is the spirit of Jesus.

Language

In the overall process of thought reform, specific terms in the church language provide the mechanisms to direct the brethren in ordering their world. The loading of the language (alluded to at the beginning of this chapter as a feature of thought reform) is a verbalization of the same values and perceptions expressed in church ritual. Both words and practice are closely interrelated within the thought reform process, for the former can have its greatest impact only in its applied practice. If initial thought reform and the maintenance of the group's world view is to succeed, such application of language to practice in daily lives must continue. Thus, in testimonies the brethren are trained to use the words of their language as both a guide for action and the subsequent evaluation of such action.

In addition, the testimonies provide a framework for developing a jargon to distinguish the brethren and thus provide group identity. Their greetings, "Hallelujah" with the response

of "Amen" identify them immediately as Local Church brethren. Often when angered or frustrated by a particular situation, the phrase "O, Ju a" (Oh, Lord) serves as a verbal outlet. I can remember when once during a syau pai meeting, the phone repeatedly interrupted us. At the third interruption, the elderly brother was softly calling "O, Lord" all the way to the phone.

I first became aware of the significance of church language in maintaining group boundaries after I noticed the difficulty my assistant had in grasping the meaning of expressions used by the brethren. She explained that certain words were not used in vernacular Chinese; it took many meetings to become accustomed to the connotation of particular words. Among these are: gwang jing (光景) in place of ching sying (情形) to mean conditions. The former word implies derivation from light and is thus useful when the members emphasize that Jesus has shown them in their conditions....what is the correct action to take, e.g., de jwo (得着) is used instead of de dau (得到) to denote "receive", as in receiving Jesus. "Wai bang ren" (外邦人) usually in outside society used to refer to a stranger from another country, in church refers to any non-Christian. I myself experienced the distinct difference in church language from that of other Chinese: I first heard the word "Syi le" (喜樂) in a church meeting. After satisfying

myself by looking it up in a dictionary, I used the word when speaking with my non-Christian Chinese friends. For example, "Today I feel very syi le." Noting my friends looking rather puzzled, I was told that the term was seldom used in everyday language. Below is noted several expressions and words with their literal translations as well as connotations in church language repertoire:

<u>Word or Expression</u>	<u>Literal meaning</u>	<u>Use in Church</u>
Wo you yige gan jywe (我有一個感覺)	I have a feeling...	Feeling from Jesus
Gung ying (供應)	Supply	Refers to quality of spirit supply given by Jesus for meeting
Bai shang (擺上)	Put on table	Prepare oneself
Jyau tung (交通)	Communication	Fellowship; converse with brother or sister
Chu kou (出口)	Export	Used regarding speaking at gospel meetings in Park
Deng hou ju (等候主)	Wait for the Lord	When unable to decide what to do, one should wait for sign from Jesus
Ling dz you (靈自由)	Spirit is free	Completely directed by Jesus
Mai dzang (埋葬)	Burial	Used to describe one's being baptized a second time in order to bury old self
Hu han ye su de ming (呼喊耶穌的名)	Call out Jesus' name	Describes process of continually calling to Jesus
Gau ren (攪人)	Considered to be rather coarse term in Chinese to describe stirring up or turning over	Completely changing self when one believes in Jesus without regard for society's standards

The above repertoire of language has been built up over time (and is often ridiculed by other Christians. At one meeting (9/7/72) the term "en gau" (恩膏, anointing) was introduced in prayer-reading of I John 2:20, 27: "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know...; but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him." During the meetings, the brethren in testimonies discussed this term as referring to anointment by the Spirit and thus being equivalent to the latter; in church everyone has this "anointment" which directs all activities. This was the first time that I heard this term introduced and the brethren spent the meeting considering its proper use. Toward the conclusion of the meeting, one high school-aged brother rose and testified: "A friend of mine who was an adopted son lost 700 dollars of his father's money. He was afraid to go home and said he would kill himself. I had an "anointing" (en gau) to talk with this friend and comfort him..." Thus, as seen from this example, testimonies reinforce the principle of interpreting the past in terms of the present by encouraging the brethren to use a newly-learned term to describe an experience long past. The testimonies not only provide a framework for reflecting on past events, but also are in themselves religious

experiences. This blurring of "religion reflected" with "religion experienced" is a key to maintaining the continuity in the dialectic between the church's world view and the brethren's life experiences.

We have looked at the church meeting as a symbolic expression of the church's world view. From this standpoint its purposes have been two: creating in the form of the meeting a reality which conforms to the subjective one expressed in the world view; and providing a means to maintain the brethren's commitment to church life by offering a framework for interpreting individual experiences in terms of the overall church world view. The stream of consciousness format of the meetings supports this view of the importance of spirit over mind (with the expected de-emphasis on doctrine as will be noted in next chapter).

The church brethren themselves speak of restoring Christianity to its pristine form and snatching control over the outside world for Jesus. That such profane forms have been given spiritual guises suggests the possibility of viewing the church in terms of a sectarian revitalization movement (see Chapter VII). What has happened is that these forms have been absorbed and adapted to a sacred content within the church grounds as summarized in the chart below:

<u>RITUAL</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>FORM: OUT-SIDE WORLD</u>	<u>CHURCH ADAPTATION</u>
Overall meeting	Build spirit Growth of church body Unity and harmony	Feast	Family feast with Jesus as food
Prayer	Release spirit to control mind	Wild and chaotic	Stream of consciousness conversations among group and between group and Jesus
Hymns	Atmosphere Be like children	Popular melodies	Given spiritual content
Prayer-reading	Ingest word	Studying in traditional China as well as memorization technique in schools today	Spiritual words used
Testimonies	Give proof of gospel's truth	School digests of students	Individual experiences given meaning in context of group morality and world view

THOUGHT REFORM AND WORLD VIEW

One central feature to thought reform involved directing the brethren's perception of all facets of church life as being free. While they would continuously state that within the church "we are all free" (dz you, 自由), at the same time I could see instances in which Witness Lee seemed to breach such freedom. At special meetings he would attack certain testimonies

and hymns if they did not meet with his approval. Moreover, what the brethren viewed as unity and harmony in the meeting, I saw as mere conformity under the threat of group ostracism.

I began to ask the brethren the meaning of freedom and soon became aware that the definition of the term was quite different from that with which I was familiar. It seemed to correspond closely with the distinction made between freedom in the West and the concept of the term in China in general. In the more specific context of the church's world view, freedom is seen as a state in which the individual is no longer subject to direction by either his emotion or rational mind. His spirit, imbued with that of Jesus, directs his every action. Only then are these actions viewed as occurring spontaneously and freely.

During an interview of several brothers by a young Chinese woman who was studying at a Christian seminary in Taipei (she was Presbyterian), I started to grasp the group's logic in accepting Lee's (and others') oftentimes authoritarian leadership while not rejecting the notion of a free church atmosphere. The woman noted that in the Presbyterian church, the elders often used their authority to control the young people who resented this. In response, one of the brothers said that when the so-called "chyan myan" (前面) brothers (those "at front", in positions of authority) made decisions they should

not be opposed even if the decision is considered to be a mistake. The reason is that if the elders and other brethren in positions of authority merely follow the wishes of the total membership, then they are of no use. Because the ultimate concern of God is for church unity, the brethren should try to follow the decisions of the elders; if they cannot, only then does this show that the decision does not fit with God's will.

At the end of the interview, our group began discussing some general features of political behavior; I noted that perhaps it is not important that people ARE free but rather that they THINK they are free. One brother quickly said, "Yes, just like Witness Lee!" as another admonished him not to speak so casually. Taking the lead from this remark, the question that concerns us is how the brethren are taught to view themselves and the church life as being free. The key to such an understanding lies in a statement by a young church leader: "Freedom is that of the group not of the individual." This concept of freedom (dz you, 自由) in the Local Church is best understood by juxtaposing it with that of dz ran (自然) or naturalness. I often heard both terms used in church, usually as "We have freedom" and "In church we are quite natural." In the Chinese language, dz you, or freedom, expresses a force that is rather

chaotic and out of control. On the other hand, naturalness is derived from two words which mean "individual" and "flowing with the stream." In the church, the important limitation on freedom is that it can only exist within a group context. The individual can only be free by accepting his nature which is to move with the stream or group (note the title of the church's journal in English as The Stream). Otherwise, he is a slave to his individual mind which can only bring him sorrow. His goal is to acquiesce to Jesus' spirit and His earthly manifestation, the church. (It was pointed out to me by my wife that the flesh, mind, and spirit which comprise an individual are analogous to Freud's id, ego, and superego. Within this latter framework, it can be said that one can only find happiness if he allows the superego--i.e., God, manifested in the group--to control both his id and ego.) Only within this group can he find fulfillment and significance (again, the ideal expressed with regard to the individual and his relation to his family in traditional China.) This perception of the blending between church and Jesus leads to the idea of the individual's sacrifice of self to the wishes of the group. At one meeting of young people, a co-worker who had been abroad told of a brother and sister in the Philippines who loved each other but the other brethren and elders felt that this relationship was inappropriate. They criticized

these two for going around together openly. This co-worker went on to say that he was not concluding that the decision of the elders in this case was a correct one; he only wanted to point out that the two people involved were correct in their obedience to the orders of the organization and thus they were living in God (7/3/72).

How then is this particular view of freedom reinforced in the ritual of the church meetings? During the meetings, several levels of communication are taking place. In the initial prayers, the brethren are recognizing Jesus' superior status and calling on Him to participate in their meeting. Individual responses become a part of a single stream-of-consciousness prayer from the group to Jesus. Here there is symbolized links with communication between the group and Jesus; between the individual and Jesus; and finally among individuals within the group. The key to successfully incorporating the individual into the group is first to screen the individual's communication with Jesus with that between the group and Jesus; next, the distinction between group/Jesus communication and individual/group communication is blurred. Jesus is both superior to and a part of the brethren. The former is expressed in the analogy of Jesus: us: :father: son. In the image of ingestion of Jesus (eat and drink the Lord), Jesus becomes a part of the total group. The second set of

of relationships is emphasized in the individual framing his participation in the group meeting according to a general theme; that set is Jesus: group: :group: individual. The conclusion is thus that following the group becomes synonymous with following the direction of Jesus' spirit, the ultimate freedom.

Moreover, the group becomes the focal point for all rites of passage, which becomes apparent at baptism, marriage, and death. During baptism, the new brethren are encouraged to participate fully in the church life if they are to grow spiritually. In both the wedding ceremonies I attended, little mention was made of the bride and groom (and in one case the groom was a member of an extremely prominent and influential family); rather, stress was placed on the fact that both individuals should live the church life and dedicate themselves to church growth. Finally, the funeral messages emphasized the dead's dedication to the church and temporary physical separation from the church body. In the case of all three meetings, the brethren utilized the time to evangelize and attempt to bring new members within the church, this occurring after the wedding ceremony and during the post-funeral feast (to the consternation of non-Christians present). The result of this emphasis of group over individual and the blending of group and Jesus is that worship of Jesus comes close to being worship of the

community. This leads me to consider the church as a prototype of the durkheimian model of religious life, a fact also noted by Wilson with regard to the Exclusive Brethren (Wilson, 1967, 336).

Finally, in addition to the initial prayer, other facets of the church meetings involve these levels of group and individual. In the hymns, different individuals or groups of individuals invite others to sing with them; at first divisions are usually according to sex, age, jya, but they conclude with the total group singing the hymn in unity. In testimonies, individuals express particular experiences but interpret them in both the language and world view of the church. The AMEN responses to these testimonies give group sanction to individual experiences. In the final prayer, the utterances of individuals in the meetings, having been given unity in the previous prayer-reading, take on the form of group expressions; inspirations derived from the meeting are those of the group directed by Jesus' spirit. Thus, the members are recognizing individual differences while at the same time rejecting their significance in the church life. One can see why to insure successful thought reform, it is important that the individual discuss in both the syau pai and larger meetings his particular experiences. For only through externalizing and objectifying these experiences and then reintegrating them

in the group's world view can he internalize the relationships and roles important to church unity.

It is difficult to assess the success of this process of thought reform for many of those who were baptized did not become active members within the church. Nevertheless, the fact that so many are baptized seems to have a positive effect on fueling the enthusiasm for those already dedicated to church life. A case was brought to my attention in which a sister who had left the folds of the church returned several months later. She said she had trouble relating to her new friends in the outside world who were only concerned with movies, dating, and the like. Some of the brethren may backslide, but it is the responsibility of the other brethren to try to maintain contact. If trouble should occur in the individual's life, they should aid him and thus draw him back into the church. Once within the group, constant participation in church activities will bring the individual eventually around to accepting the church as his family and the group as the authority to which he is responsible as well as a part.

In summary, the incorporation of the individual within the group may be viewed in the overall terms of thought reform. The individual is taught a new language, new sets of relationships, and a world view by which he is to interpret his experiences in daily life. His spiritual growth results

from the continuance of the dialectic between these experiences and the reality of the group's world view. In the ritual of church meetings, this world view is fused with experiences so that there is ultimately only one TRUTH or REALITY. The new themes and hymns created in the church express growth and change as an inevitable (natural) process. The individual, an intricate part of the total church body, takes part in this growth. Finally, de-emphasis of the leadership of elders, deacons, and co-workers in the meetings tends to cover up the structure of the church. All that is apparent is a unified and harmonious church body directed by the spirit of Jesus.

Footnote

¹These testimonies follow the same basic pattern as those I recorded myself, and were taken from two meetings held in Shih Lin on March 2, 1969 and April 20, 1969 (translated from the German by Veronica Wolf):

March 2, 1969--When a person is in Christ, he is a new person. I am a truck driver. The work is very dangerous but I am always at peace. Last week I had a little accident but, luckily, the Lord helped me and I am at peace. Last Tuesday evening, I returned from Hsinchu to Taipei. It was raining but because I wanted to quickly return home, I drove very fast. Suddenly, I saw in front of me a large trench. I applied the brakes but the truck slid further ahead and I saw that I would fall into it. Unconsciously, I cried out: "Oh, Lord!" I thank God and a moment later the truck came to a halt. I got out and saw that the trench was a fathom deep; if I had fallen into it, I would at least have been injured, if not killed. Then I thought that this probably happened

because I called "Oh, Lord!", and that Jesus Christ came immediately to me and saved me from this danger. That is why I think, my brothers and sisters: when you are in danger and call "Oh, Lord," then you will certainly find peace. (Eberhard, 1972, 57-58)

March 2, 1969—I lost my mother when I was still little. My father was busy and could not concern himself too much with me. From childhood on, I have not received any love. After my marriage, life in my home did not fulfill me. I went dancing, I ran around and always returned home late. My husband scolded me but I did not listen to him; but he did not warn me either but let me go and that is what made me worse.

One night my sister took me along to listen to the gospel. At once I was seized by the Holy Ghost. I regretted my deeds. I only returned home very late. My mother-in-law received me at the door. Basically I hated my mother-in-law and always criticized her. When she was sick I did not take care of her; only if she wanted something to eat, did I give it to her. As I saw her now as she opened the door for me at such a late hour not saying a word, I felt very bad and said: "Mother-in-law, I am back." And she looked at me surprised because I had never addressed as "mother-in-law." That evening I cried and then I prayed: "Jesus, I need your love." The next evening I went to church again. Without noticing it, I found my husband suddenly lovable, my child lovable and I did not hate my mother-in-law any more. Since I know that Jesus loves me, my interests changed. Formerly, when my husband had taken my mother-in-law out, I was angry and discontent. Now I can be quietly at home the whole day and feel happy and peaceful. I thank God. (Eberhard, 1972, 63-64)

April 20, 1969—My daughter yelled often at home: "Oh, Lord!" And I always admonished her: "You are a girl. It does not sound good when you always yell like that." Only now do I know that she did it because the Lord was in her heart.

Last Friday, she somehow fell on the third floor. The bone was all bent and she cried out in terrible pain: "O, Lord! I have to go to school

today, we have an exam." The neighbors came running to help. The believers among them all knelt down and asked the Lord for help. All prayed but to no avail. The reason for this was that their heart was not sincere. We called a taxi to take her to the hospital. But because of the injured foot we could not get her into the taxi. And while we were all thinking—oh, miracle—the foot turned again and suddenly was normal again. Not only was it all right, she could even run. She rested on the bed awhile and then returned home.

When her teacher heard about this, he told her she should go to the hospital and have X-rays because he feared the bone could be injured. So, we spent ten dollars for X-rays and the result was that the bone was completely normal, nothing was wrong with it. I now recognize the unlimited power of the Lord. We want to spread his teachings to the people of the world who have not as yet been saved. Amen.
(Eberhard, 1972, 74-75)

CHAPTER VII

RITUAL AS IDEOLOGY

Examination of the 1966 split in the Local Church illustrates the relationship between changes in the church's organization and ritual. As noted in Chapter II, Sparks' visit had undermined the ongoing dialectic between world view and experience by challenging the boundaries defining the organization. Once the dissidents left, it was up to Witness Lee to rebuild the church organization on which this world-building dialectic is based. How he did this comprises the subject matter of this chapter.

As stated before, in referring to the history of the bitter split which occurred in the Local Church, individuals on either side supplied information which tended to justify their respective positions. An analysis of the types of information recalled provides insight into the fundamental causes of the disagreement. In general, those who left attacked Lee's manipulation of power within the church as well as other personal behavior. In addition, much attention was paid to what were considered heretical ideas and strange developments in the church ritual after the split. On the other hand, supporters of Lee concentrated on many of the dissidents' desire for personal status that led them to

forsake the only true church. To them the proof of God's support for their position lies in the reality of their own successful growth when compared with that of the other group whose Taipei membership is merely several hundre. This may be the reason for the Local Church brethren's general silence regarding details of the split--discussion could only injure their position by introducing the issue to the more than half the members who have been baptized since the split. Thus, revelation of such events is carefully controlled, as by Witness Lee in a sermon to young brethren at a special meeting (February 12, 1972). This sermon, as well as three articles written with respect to the split in Hong Kong, is my main source for the pro-Lee position. For the opposite side, I have depended on interviews, a public letter (Shr, 1970), and the Hong Kong magazine article referred to in Chapter II (Lu, 1973).

Despite the different information supplied by each group, there are certain points of agreement regarding the dispute. All parties noted that it was tragic and upsetting and had an adverse effect, during its duration, on church growth and unity. Many of the individuals who left the church ranked high in the leadership hierarchy of the church. Because of this, there was much confusion among the brethren regarding the reasons for the conflict. One informant remembered that

immediately after the split, attendance at church meetings floundered and many brethren not directly involved wandered about to other church services. Moreover, while the dispute in Taiwan has been finalized and the situation among the various parties is somewhat stable, its effects still linger in Hong Kong. There it has taken on even more drastic aspects, with groups opposing Witness Lee "occupying" church buildings and forcing Lee to turn to the courts for resolution. Given the world view of the brethren, one can imagine the effect of taking spiritual disagreements to secular courts for resolution.

Those interviewed, to whichever group they belonged, agreed that Sparks' visit marked the point in which disagreement began within the Local Church. For those who broke with Lee, however, this visit served merely as a catalyst for quarrels in which underlying tensions became manifest. One informant noted that even before Sparks' visit, he had become concerned with Lee's overemphasis on Nee's concept of the principle of locality. He said that when he questioned Lee, Lee responded by stating that the worker was very young and "what could he know about things such as this." This picture substantiated the overall one of the early years in church development in Taiwan in which Witness Lee maintained close scrutiny and control over all the co-workers, viewing the relationship as one similar to

that between father and children. Time and again various informants recalled the strictness with which Lee directed them in their early training.

This strictness was maintained over the years and as the various co-workers and elders grew within the church organization, they matured and began to question absolute parental authority. One informant has suggested the great importance placed in Chinese churches on authority and discipline (Yu, p.I, 1974); thus, Sparks' prestige and background as a spiritual leader made him a logical alternative to Lee as a source of inspiration without the direct control involved. In stating the three reasons for his own leaving the church, one ex-worker in the Local Church was able to summarize the basic points of disagreement between Lee and the dissidents. They were: church ground, preaching, and positional authority. As will be shown in the ensuing discussion these three elements are not only closely related but also were mentioned with different emphasis by the opposing factions.

"Church ground" (Jyau Hwei Li Chang, 教會立場) is the literal translation for a church's organizational base; in the case of the Local Church that ground is the principle of locality. The nature of church organization has been previously mentioned as the focal point of disagreement between Lee and T. Austin-Sparks. On Taiwan the brethren within the Local

Church had been discouraged from close contact with Christians of other denominations. Lee argued that the ground for building the church was prescribed in the scriptures as being that of locality. Any other basis for church organization was considered non-scriptural and thus damaging to the unity of the body of Christ. Universal church unity could only be achieved by restoring the church on the basis of independent local churches maintaining contact and fellowship through the offices of apostle and workers, much like the situation during Paul's time. On the other side of the argument, it was maintained that Lee carried the doctrine of locality to its extreme and was using it to create a denomination such as those that already exist. As such it was not furthering the cause of Christian unity but rather disrupting it. One individual mentioned that while working with Nee on the mainland, he had many friends in other Christian denominations, but while in Taiwan, his contacts were exclusively with Christians within the Local Church. The Local Church shunned (and does to this day) any participation in ecumenical organizations, and this was seen as being in direct contradiction of the spiritual unity of all Christians. Many of these younger co-workers were in agreement with Sparks' statement that the Local Church had been working on too narrow a ground for the growth and spiritual development of Christianity

in Taiwan. In effect the dissidents saw Lee as creating an exclusive church on a doctrinal basis rejecting people with different spiritual feelings.

Preaching: Immediately following Sparks' departure, Lee expressed his displeasure with the latter's ideas in meetings with his co-workers in Taipei. Nevertheless, several of the co-workers and elders had been impressed with Sparks and began meeting together to read the latter's works. The core of this group was at the Third Assembly Hall. When Lee discovered that such meetings were taking place, he was very angry with the culprits. He felt that they had been meeting behind his back and in doing so were challenging his authority as church apostle.

In addition several of the co-workers heeded Sparks' advice to begin preaching among Christians of other denominations. They were either reprimanded or relieved of their positions as co-workers. Moreover, to insure that those sympathetic to Sparks' ideas would not be able to disseminate them among other church brethren, Lee began to demand that all speakers for the church follow an outline distributed by Lee instead of using their own ideas. To many of them this contradicted the notion that preaching should be spontaneous, according to direction by the spirit.

Positional authority: While the first area of disagreement was discussed in theoretical terms, the problem of authority within the Local Church was revealed in terms of information specific to personalities within the church. The first group of arguments which we will examine regard the person of Witness Lee himself. Several instances were noted in which the integrity of Lee was questioned. One dealt with finances within the church; the other with Lee's personal moral standards. It should be noted here that this information comes exclusively from those who left the church and there is little information regarding this aspect on the other side. Nonetheless, it was reiterated by several sources (without coaching or leading questions by me). After Sparks left Taiwan, Lee used church funds to go to the United States and England where he visited the church group of Sparks, who according to my informants was not aware of the great hostility Lee felt toward him. Later Lee discovered that his wife had cancer. After returning to Taiwan, he decided to go to the United States to seek medical assistance. At this point, the rather blurred boundaries between church and personal wealth first caused friction. Some members wondered if the church would provide funds for their wives should the need arise for them to go to the United States. It was decided that Lee's wife's contributions to the church warranted making such an exception. The treatments, however,

were not successful and she soon died. Within a year, Lee's reputation was not enhanced by his marriage to a sister whose previous simple appearance soon changed to one affected by jewelry, make-up, and a fancy coiffeur. The remarriage within one year of the death of his first wife was considered in bad taste and some members began to complain that Lee, who often expounded on the need to de-emphasize matters of the flesh, had perhaps lost his spirituality. A church sister noted that this opposition had been countered by reference to the consequences of Aaron's and Miriam's criticism of Moses' marriage, the former was stricken with a skin disease. The analogy suggested that like Moses, Lee was only responsible to the Lord and no one had the right to interfere with his personal decision. This argument reflected the view that Lee as modern day apostle of Christ held a position above the rest of the members and was thus responsible only to God for his actions.

In the area of finance, a second problem arose when large sums of money were given to Lee's son for investment purposes in the United States, whether for personal or church gain is disputed. When challenged for using church funds for private gains, Lee allegedly replied that the money had been given to him personally by overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and that nothing illegal or immoral had occurred.

Other complaints regarding the authority of Lee were also mentioned. In the early 1950s, a clinic was established by the church, headed by a Chinese within the church with the assistance of two Western doctors who belonged to the Local Church in Taipei. Disagreement arose regarding the participation of one of the latter. The ultimate result was that the clinic was closed and the structure built for its use became a living quarters for young brethren attending university in Taipei.

Another case mentioned was that of a marriage between two church co-workers. Without seeking Lee's approval these two individuals were married. This apparently angered Lee. Whether he opposed the marriage or was merely angry because they did not first consult him is unclear. The result was that although the two initially remained within the church, their stipend as co-workers was cut in half and this caused them great difficulty. The brother who had introduced the couple was sent to Hwalien (on the east coast of Taiwan) as punishment; later, after helping Lee with a manuscript, he was recalled to Taipei. Here it was noted that one of the methods used by Lee in maintaining the loyalty of his co-workers was his control over their residence and other rewards. His closest followers were given the more prestigious positions in Taipei. Moreover, in the training meetings led by Lee, everyone had a set place according to how well they had performed the previous year. It was noted that

Lee would sometimes move someone from the first to last row in one year, causing the individual to lose face in the eyes of his fellow workers. If an individual had done exceedingly well, he would be moved to the editorial room and placed in charge of church publications. Moreover, while the church claimed that stipends to co-workers were distributed according to anonymous contributions by the membership, these often were not enough to maintain the co-workers' livelihood. Therefore, unspecified funds were distributed among the workers. One informant noted that Lee himself would decide the amount, place it in an envelope to be given to the elder at the First Assembly Hall who serves as the church's accountant. The result is that Lee used his economic stranglehold over the co-workers to assure their loyalty.

One of the prime targets of those who disagreed with Lee was the reality of decision-making within the church. It was repeatedly pointed out that the ideal picture painted was one in which the elders of a local church met to discuss problems, prayed together, and reached a consensus on action. However, it was maintained by these individuals that in actuality Lee and several elders and co-workers closest to him made the decisions and presented them to a group of elders who were expected to offer their "Amens." The effect was that one could not clearly perceive Lee's direct role in the process of

decision-making for the announcements and innovations were made only by his representatives among the elders. In 1960, Lee had gone to the United States where he began establishing churches with the main headquarters in Los Angeles. It was during this period of 1960-1966 that much of the rebellion against his authority was taking place in Taiwan. His means of maintaining control over the development of the church in Taiwan was through close correspondence with top lieutenants who as elders could control the meetings (Shr, 1970, 8). These men also informed Lee regarding activities deemed rebellious.

The final aspect of church organization discussed by those who left the church was the ideal of independence of each local church under the authority of its elders. While the co-workers are considered to be under the authority of the apostle, the elders are in charge of management of local church finances and activities. The spheres of responsibility were confused, however, by the fact that several individuals held positions both as co-workers and elders in various local churches. Two cases relate the nature of this contradiction. Once the dispute began among members in the Taipei Church, the church in Tainan was confused and desired to maintain an independence. In letters sent to church headquarters, they requested that no one be sent from Taipei. Nevertheless, one of Lee's lieutenants was

was sent to Tainan which led to dissension among the brethren there. This also tended to point out to the elders in Tainan that their independence from control by Lee was merely nominal. A further example involved a brother who before the split was considered by many to be second in command to Witness Lee. He described the situation in Taiwan and noted that he was bothered by the fact that he no longer felt he could follow Lee. I heard a tape made by this brother in 1970. In it he said that he had a premonition that Lee might kick them out of the church:

In 1965 there was to be a special meeting in Taipei as Lee had returned again from the United States. (We) discussed what we would do if he kicked us out; what about our work and livelihood? Lee returned and pulled us to Taipei. I sat on the second row and felt all right, but Lee attacked me for doing bad things. I felt Lee misunderstood and wanted to talk to him about the problem, feeling that in personal matters we could compromise but not in spiritual matters. When I went to see Lee, he was very cold and didn't let me talk. Lee said I must leave but I didn't understand and thought perhaps he meant for me to leave the room. He can tell me not to be a co-worker but has no authority outside of my sinning for refusing to let me be an elder. But the Lord did not want me to argue. Lee said that as a friend, he thought it would be better for me to go to another church for I did not follow him. For example, he said that I didn't sing the songs he wrote. (I didn't realize that these hymns were doctrine.) I asked Lee to state publicly that I would be leaving and that since the house in back of the church was my own to wait until I found another before forcing me to leave. Then I thanked Lee for past help and said good-bye. The second night of the meetings, he didn't allow me to attend. Later

he went south and told everyone so that I felt I could not return there although the brethren there wanted me to remain. At the time other brethren were also kicked out.

All of these events taken together paint a picture in which the ideal of local church autonomy and spiritual control of church life became clouded by the appearance of the absolute authority of Witness Lee in matters pertaining to church organization and doctrine. Fission of this sort also existed in the Exclusive Brethren Movement when differences between strong-willed leaders could not be reconciled. Evidently this has carried over to the United States where there have been splits within various local churches since the inception of the churches (Yu, 1974). This may have been due to the existence of local church-type churches before Lee's travel to the United States. He later absorbed these groups into his own (Lu, 1973, 56).

Finally, there is a definite relationship between the nature of positional authority and success of church organization as can be seen in the case of the Local Church and the splinter group, the Christian Assembly. One informant who belonged to neither group (Yu, 1974) stated that after the split there were many disagreements among Christian Assembly leaders that prevented their working together within the same church. Many of these co-workers are now involved in their own individual

evangelical work or in Christian seminaries (both in Taiwan and the United States) rather than work within the church. That this occurred in the Christian Assembly and not in the Local Church was due to the fact these workers had co-equal status with no agreed-upon leader. This was not the case with Lee in the Local Church and thus his organization flourished. The need for one leader above all was considered a prerequisite for the success of any Chinese organization. It might be added that, in the context of the family analogy, as long as the father lives, a traditional extended family might remain cohesive; once he dies, however, the brothers usually divide the household.

The sequence of events which led to the formalization of the split started in the cities of Kaohsiung and Tainan and spread to Taipei. Some of the former workers within the church who had been relieved of their positions by Witness Lee came to Taipei in 1966 and a meeting of one of the jya was secretly transferred to another house. This was discovered after a co-worker went to the regular meeting place to see if the meeting was taking place. Lee informed the members involved that he considered their actions to be a revolt against his leadership and the split subsequently occurred in Taipei. Several months later a group of brothers who had left the Assembly Hall Church met and decided on the need for their own church

building and the Christian Assembly (Ji Du Tu Hwei Swo, 基督徒會所) came into being.

Of those brethren who left the church, most joined one of two groups. The first was the previously mentioned Christian Assembly, whose Taipei membership now approximates (on the rolls) about 500 brethren, in contrast to 20,000 for the Taipei Local Church. The second church is known as the New Testament Church (Syin Ywe Jyau Hwei, 新約教會). With its headquarters in Hong Kong, this group was started in Taiwan in 1965 with the visit of its apostle, Ruth Chang. Its initial growth was directly related to the dissension in the Assembly Hall Church taking place at that time. The overall organization of this group is similar to that of the Assembly Hall Church; like the latter, it uses locality as the basis for organization and the church in Taipei is known as the Taipei Church. The feature which distinguishes the church from the Assembly Hall Church is the use of speaking in tongues, virulently attacked by Witness Lee in special meetings held in Taipei in January of 1972. I would suggest that allowing such tongue-speaking within the church would provide another vehicle for competitors to Lee's supremacy as the most spiritually advanced member in the church. While the New Testament Church is quite small, its members' past connection with the Assembly Hall Church

must have influenced Lee to spend several hours attacking its doctrine and leader. The death from tongue cancer of Ruth Chang-s mother was attributed to the heresy of tongue-speaking. Moreover, she was alleged to have stolen the organization of the New Testament Church during her contacts with the Assembly Hall Church brethren in Southeast Asia. In addition to these two major churches, some adherents began to attend other smaller churches, while some leaders left Taiwan for America or Hong Kong.

The effect of the split on church attendance was only initially devastating. Lee began to use his publications to legitimize his position. One of the prime means was the publication of materials regarding his successes in establishing churches in the United States, seen to be a manifestation of the Lord's favor to Lee. Moreover, successful attempts were made to contact many reluctant brethren and to bring them back into the fold. Soon after the split, a special meeting was held by Lee at the First Assembly Hall, attended by approximately 2,000 people (p.i). Here he primarily discussed the doctrinal aspects of the split and the new road which the church must travel. At these meetings he emphasized three things: living in the spirit, preaching the gospel, and remaining in the church ground. The informant on these meetings who is still a member of the Assembly Hall Church stated that he felt that the latter was

the most important but that Lee needed to deal with the other two so that people could not say that he was only interested in keeping people within the Local Church. It was further noted that these three points were published and distributed abroad in other languages, among them Japanese and English. It was at this time that the name LOCAL CHURCH gained prominence over the one most used previously, Jyau Hwei Jyu Hwei Swo. Other changes in the church structure and ritual soon took place, creating a church quite distinct from the one which had existed before the split. Soon after the split the Seventh and Ninth Assembly Halls were added and a great effort was made to increase membership throughout Taiwan. Although official figures are not available, it has been estimated that the Assembly Hall Church in Taiwan had doubled its membership since the split and now totals approximately 40,000 brethren throughout the island.

The effects of the split were not felt in Hong Kong until about 1967. By then, the splinter group had a base in Taiwan and the Philippines and members of this group went to Hong Kong for fellowship with brethren in the Local Church there. They were refused communion; there was apparently both physical and verbal altercation between opposing sides and the main assembly hall there was "occupied" (word used by Lee's supporters) by opponents of Lee (1970b). The incorporated name of Lee's

group in Hong Kong is Christian Stewards (Lee has been accused of stacking the executive board of this group in his favor; Lu, 1973). In an outline of church history which I was allowed to glance at in the church in Hong Kong, it was noted that before April 1, 1967, all the brothers were of one accord. But at that time, one of the elders "with ill intentions caused by influences from troublemakers in Taiwan, joined in league with them, made secret schemes within the church by encouraging factions. The discord that year was over admitting a Taiwan troublemaker to the Lord's supper." As the situation in Hong Kong worsened, it became necessary for the opposing sides to publish arguments in their own support. In 1970 letters between Witness Lee and the dissidents were exchanged. The position of Lee was that regardless of certain differences among members, the only foundation for church organization is that of locality and members in disagreement must not leave the church body. The only solution to such problems is to "deng hou ju" ("wait for the Lord"), i.e., to wait for the spirit of Jesus to give the members a feeling to let them know which position is correct.

In the dissidents' letter (Shr, et al., 1970) compiled by members from both Taiwan and Hong Kong, the first portion was devoted to noting certain heretical teachings in the writings of Witness Lee. One was Lee's encouragement after the split

of a second baptism ("mai dzang", burial). Furthermore, Lee's leadership was discredited by claims of his misinterpretation of Watchman Nee's works. His attempt to place emphasis within the trinity on the spirit rather than the son was viewed as anti-scriptural. It was further stated that Lee had misused Nee's concept of the Local Church, which merely connoted that Christians within a locality should cooperate in the spirit of brotherhood. Finally, Lee's ritual innovations in encouraging the members to call out the name of Jesus in a loud voice were viewed as attempts to keep up with modern-day trends of using psychological means to create a revival atmosphere.

Lee's answers to these charges were contained in the publication of three leaflets. Two concerned themselves with the attacks on Lee's so-called heresies (Lee, 10/7/70; 10/1/70); the other was a series of letters from churches throughout the world supporting Lee's behavior (Lee, 1970a). He commented upon these attacks as being worthless as his detractors merely took his words out of context. He explained that the second baptism occurred first in Los Angeles at a special meeting in 1968. There in a sermon he had suggested metaphorically that we need to be buried again; one brother had been moved to take him literally and "buried himself" again in water. While Lee was surprised at this action, he did not feel he could oppose it because it must have come from the spirit.

As there is nothing in the Bible that says one can be baptized only once, he accepted this as valid--as long as it did not become a fixed rule. Just as the Israelites passed through the Jordan River and Red Sea (seen as analogous to baptism) so brethren can, if they feel moved, be baptized more than once (Lee, 10/1/70,9). Moreover, Lee asked that emphasis be placed on the general belief in Jesus Christ rather than specific doctrine. This, he stated, is consistent with Paul's tolerant attitude expressed in Romans 14:1: "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him but not for disputes over opinion...." Thus, individuals should not argue over doctrine but accept each other as brethren in Christ (Lee, 10/1/70, 13).

Overall, both groups used the same argument in attacking the opposition: the dependence on man rather than on the Lord for guidance. To the Christian Assembly this entailed Lee's seeking personal dictatorial control over church organization and meetings. In a similar vein, Lee saw the dissidents' as using human logic and discussion as a substitute for spiritual inspiration; thus, he ends his criticism of his detractors by reference to Ephesians 4:13-14: "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,

by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles."

Lee further answered all accusations by publishing a series of letters from various local churches, among which is that of the Los Angeles church recorded below:

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE CHURCH IN LOS ANGELES

TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE CHURCH

IN HONG KONG:

October 12, 1970

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We have recently seen a translation of a letter written and published by Brother James Chen to the saints of Hong Kong, in which it is alleged that Brother Witness Lee is "establishing his own totalitarianism by means of the structure of his own work to control the meetings in various places, and that there is a "centralized control of both workers and finance". As the elders of the church in Los Angeles, where Brother Witness Lee has done and continues to do much work, we wish to testify that this is a naked lie and a gross deception. Brother Lee absolutely does not control the meeting here and is not even aware of many matters of the church life. While we greatly value his fellowship and frequently seek his counsel, we can testify before the Lord that from the very beginning of the church here, he has never held or kept anything in his hand. As for finances, there is absolutely no kind of centralized control. It is a fact that Brother Lee knows very little of what transpires in the church here in regard to the finances and exercises no control.

We also wish to testify as co-workers together with Brother Lee that there is no kind of structure, organization, or any control in the work. We work and move together in prayer, in fellowship, and by the guidance and presence of the Lord. Sometimes a burden for a move in the work is initiated and voiced not through him, but through us, and he frequently seeks our counsel and fellowship before acting.

We give this testimony with the earnest prayer and desire that innocent children of God will not receive these slanderous reports regarding a servant of the Lord without becoming aware of the facts of the case. The fact is that

these reports are absolutely ungrounded and untrue. We are witnesses to this. The Lord will vindicate Himself and His servant.

Yours in the Lord Jesus,

Samuel I-Lung Chang
William E. Mallon
John C. Ingalls
James Barber
(Lee, 1970a, 5)

The problem with using all of these 1970 documents as evidence of the actual cause of the split is that they were written several years after the conflict and some of the attacks on Lee's theoretical heresies (e.g., calling to the Lord, burial) were based on the latter's writing after the time of the split. When I spoke to members of the Christian Assembly, they made little reference at first to these doctrinal questions but rather emphasized the problems over church organization. Thus, with the exception of the doctrinal disagreement over cooperation with other Christian denominations, much of the attack leveled at Lee's teachings may have occurred as an attempt to draw Local Church members into the Christian Assembly by discrediting Lee's leadership.

The Church as Sect

Although the brethren shy away from such terms as "sect" in describing the nature of their church, an overview of attributes ascribed to sectarian movements by Wilson (1966) seems to place the Local Church squarely within the sociological framework of

sect. Attributes common to sectarian movements are also applicable to the Local Church:

1. Sects seek to regulate the pattern of their members' lives in particular ways (Wilson, 208).

The Local Church seeks to socialize the brethren through activities and testimonies into certain behavioral patterns conforming to group values.

2. Sects are normally lay movements, which practice their religion without an established professional ministry (Wilson, 208).

Local Church emphasizes lay control at the local level in the hands of the elders. The co-workers help guide the brethren under the direction of the elders.

3. Sects reject distinction between lay and ministry. All men should be equally committed and commitment must be total (Wilson, 209).

All brothers and sisters are part of the church family.

4. The sect usually condemns the cultural disposition of the secular society, or at least withdraws from them (Wilson, 209).

5. The sect represents itself as a community and fraternity.

6. The sect provides a total reference group for the individual who belongs (Wilson, 211).

Part of the thought reform process involves getting the new member to think of his life in terms of the church's world view and activities.

7. The sect affords a coherent community organization, a stable pattern of order (Wilson, 212).

8. Sects emphasize the priesthood of all believers. They frequently reject or disregard the status system of the wider society and are thus ideologically opposed to the creation of distinctive statuses in their own organization (Wilson, 213).

In the preceding chapters we have seen instances of each of the above features. While we can readily identify the Local Church as a sectarian movement, we can go one step further by distinguishing it as conversionist. Within this framework, starting from Wilson's analysis below, we can begin to understand

more clearly facets in church development as they occurred after the split in 1966.

the conversionist sects...were sects relying on revivalism for recruitment, emphasizing a change of heart as the condition of salvation, generally reasserting traditional moral values and religious imagery, and doing so, initially with intense emotionalism and expressiveness. Lay involvement in them was not so much a matter of lay government as freedom of expression and the absence of ministerial decorum and order. As these groups were stabilized and as they adjusted to the new condition of salvation that they proclaimed, so the emotionalism diminished. As their members gained in wealth and social respectability, so their disapproval of the wider culture declined. Having expected salvation in another world by conversion, the often first discovered the "kingdom of heaven" in the sect through socialization to high moral standards, they attained salvation in the wider world where they were no longer so insecure. The paradox of the conversionist sect has often been that having promised its votaries social mobility after death, it has provided it for them in real life--but by means it had not envisaged. Faith in God has been, at least in the past two centuries, a frequent indirect means to earthly salvation. Social adjustment has been a latent function of the conversionist sect. (Wilson, 1970, 235-236).

The above tendency in conversionist sects toward denominationalism provides some basis for understanding the nature of the conflict between Lee and the splinter group, later known as the Christian Assembly. The key problem which led to the split was disagreement over exclusiveness of the Local Church vis-a-vis other Christian denominations. At stake was the world view which clearly differentiated the Local Church from both denominational Christianity and the secular world. Lee felt that once his

co-workers began to have extensive fellowship with other churches that the perception of the exclusive nature of the Local Church would soon be lost. The result would be similar to that which I perceived as having occurred within the Christian Assembly. In the latter, there seems to be a general acceptance of the legitimacy of other churches as well as a lesser tendency to view the outside world as fraught with evil. The attitude within the Christian Assembly may be succinctly stated by the daughter of one of its elders, who was also an elder in the Taipei Local Church before the Split: "If God had wanted us only to live the church life, he would have had us born in church." While I was not able to get a strict account of the makeup of the Christian Assembly, informants in the Local Church noted that it was composed of individuals of some social standing and with much background in scriptural study. The rejection of exclusiveness and greater participation with members of other Christian churches suggest that the Christian Assembly brethren have a greater tolerance of the wider culture and have accepted their role as one denomination among many Christian denominations in Taiwan.

At the level of ritual, this denominationalist quality of the Christian Assembly is reinforced. During my first visit to their meetings, I was struck by an awareness that had I not earlier known of the past connection between the two groups,

it would be difficult to perceive any historical link. In the span of five years, the meetings of the two groups had become quite distinct. The vibrancy and enthusiasm exhibited in Local Church meetings--popular hymns, calling out the name of the Lord, constant testimonies--are contrasted to the rather staid service of the Christian Assembly. Here the meeting begins with a prayer usually led by an elder or co-worker. There is very little participation in this prayer by those assembled except occasional Amens. Next a hymn is sung; this hymn is chosen from a large hymnal which was used by the Local Church before it was reorganized by Witness Lee. Then a Bible passage is chosen to be read and a long sermon is given by one of the church workers. Sometimes, one or more individuals might comment on the content of the passage but this is rather limited. A final hymn and prayer are offered and the meeting is concluded.

In 1972 the church began having Bible study meetings on Thursdays and one aspect that was noteworthy was the reluctance of most of the members to speak up. Later it was commented to me that this was because many of them were not clear on the meaning of the passage and felt reluctant to speak without a clear understanding of the passage read. Thus, the burden of speaking at these meetings fell to the church workers. The organizational effect is to put much of the responsibility

for evangelical activities on the shoulders of the co-workers within the church. Thus, membership in the church is still primarily composed of those who once belonged to the Local Church.

The significance of this comparison is that it suggests the need for maintaining a certain emotional level in church services if brethren are to be committed to conversionist goals. This is particularly true in a non-Christian society where the majority are basically hostile to Christianity. That emotional level allows the members to overcome many of the fears and inhibitions which might prevent them from carrying out their evangelical activities. Because the conversionist goal is viewed as a gradual one, there is a need to create an atmosphere of continual enthusiasm (much like that of permanent revolution on the mainland). The self-perception on the part of the brethren of the Local Church as a unified and harmonious body directed by Jesus' spirit was a key in maintaining the level of enthusiasm. When the power struggle developed, this perception was undermined. The reality of the Local Church's highly developed structure was revealed, thus hindering the ability to carry out with efficiency the organizational goal of conversion. What must concern us here is the means by which the church organization was revitalized so that its conversionist goals could be maintained.

The Use of Ritual

To reiterate from Chapter V, the world view of a religious group serves the functions of providing the group with a map for perceiving its boundaries as well as furnishing individuals within the group with certain motivations on which to base their behavior. When the reality of such a world view is threatened by conflicting presentations of reality, its ability in serving as a format for the accomplishment of organizational goals is undermined for it no longer orders the world in a way in which behavior can be directed. Before the split, Sparks' visit touched off events which disrupted both the church's organization (plausibility structure) and the dialectic between world view and experience on which its world-building process was based. Because the criterion of locality for church organization closely defined the overall boundaries of the brethren's world view, his criticism had undermined the church from both standpoints. When his alternative was accepted by some young brethren, disagreement among the leaders rendered asunder the reality of a unified and harmonious church body. No longer did the brethren perceive the Local Church as directed by Jesus' spirit rather than by the machinations of human rationale. The distinctiveness of the Local Church in contrast to other Christian bodies could no longer be supported in reality. There was little unity to provide a basis for carrying out the organizational goal

of gaining new membership. The halting of evangelical activity made it difficult to maintain the view expressed in the world view of the spirit (the Local Church) slowly gaining control over the forces of the mind and flesh (denominations and secular world). With the boundaries expressed in the world view blurred, there was no foundation for building up a strong church. It was thus necessary for Lee to reemphasize the boundaries of church life in order to restore church unity and solidarity for the accomplishment of his organizational goals. The prime means for restoring the boundaries expressed in the world view is ideology which to reiterate I am defining as a systematic set of ideas for creating and utilizing organization in order to reach certain goals.

In considering ideology from this standpoint, it is best for us to begin from the source of this set of ideas, Witness Lee. In every Local Church his figure looms large; it was under his leadership and direction that the Local Church has attained its high level of growth throughout the world. It was Witness Lee who was the focal point of the split on Taiwan, as well as the central figure in Hong Kong and the Philippines. His authority and the brethren's perception of his role as church apostle thus become the crucial aspect if one is to understand the use of ideology in the Local Church today.

To grasp the reasons for the successes of the Local Church

as an evangelical organization, one must have the experience of seeing Witness Lee in action, i.e., leading one of the large special meetings of 10,000 brethren. Both his supporters and opponents alike admit to his great leadership qualities. I participated in two weekly special meetings at which he was the main speaker--10,000 people nightly for a week was the estimated attendance. (The first of these meetings was held at the First Girls' School; the second time it was held at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial). His magnetism as a speaker could be felt throughout the auditorium. Brethren acted as if under his spell; elders of the church were made to perform stunts as Lee spoke and acted out his messages. On the first night of the special meeting in the First Girls' School, we all faced Lee, who sat on a podium from where he spoke. The next day, because of a dearth in enthusiastic participation by the brethren, he had the chairs placed in a semicircular arrangement and microphones placed throughout the auditorium to enhance eye contact and encourage both participation and a sense of unity among the brethren. This again points to the importance Lee places on space as symbolizing and influencing behavior, as is the case with the design of church buildings, also initially blueprinted by him.

In addition to this absolute factor of Lee's forcefulness as a speaker and as an organizer, there are several factors

which make the group in Taiwan receptive to his influence. His successes at organization, particularly in the United States, give him almost charismatic powers in the eyes of other brethren (or at least place him beyond criticism in his status as church apostle.) His interaction with the brethren takes the form of that between teacher and pupil, roles recognized by both Lee and the brethren alike. This relationship entails one of respect and dependence on the part of the pupil with the teacher carrying the burden of guiding the latter. If we reassess the original analogy of Jesus: us::father: son:: teacher: pupil by expressing it in more mundane terms, we might replace Jesus with Lee. The possibility for doing this became evident to me when after Lee's first visit I went to a church meeting where the brethren were pray-reading Lee's sermons. Lee as teacher is representative of the same superior/inferior relationship that is found in that between Jesus and the brethren. This is not to say that the brethren consider Lee to be God, only that they recognize his closeness to Jesus and the complete inspiration directing his every word. This leads them to confuse him symbolically with the deity in the ritual of the meetings, and thus to relate to him in a way analogous to that of their relation to Jesus.

Lee's guidance of the brethren thus takes on certain qualities similar to the way the members perceive Jesus as directing them. One of the main themes expressed by the brethren throughout

the length of my stay was the fear of being alone--the fear of not being in the right place when Jesus returns. The right place for the pupil/child is in the home with the teacher/father. The threat of leaving the child alone is a frightening one and one that is often heard on the streets of Taipei. Lee too threatens--that he will not return from America to teach the brethren and give them his latest inspiration. It is interesting that this fear of missing Jesus when he returns was expressed most openly in the meetings before Lee's first visit when the brethren had been made aware that he would return only if they showed (in numbers of conversions) that they were deserving. This was also the approach that Lee had taken with the dissident co-workers whom he had reared. They were his children/pupils; the relationship was never considered to be an equal one. At one special meeting when Lee noted that in church everyone is a child ("hai dz," 孩子), he scolded one young brother who had the audacity to suggest in testimony that Brother Lee too was a child. Lee's prestige came from his success in building up the church in Taiwan and the United States; even young Americans looked to him for guidance (an enormous compliment in Taiwan). If the brethren then felt that they owed Jesus so much, then likewise they considered their debts to Lee to be great.

In the Local Church Lee is both prophet and priest in

Weberian terms. He has a status given in the Bible as apostle and certain responsibilities attached to that status. Nevertheless, he is considered to have the inside track on inspiration and ability to guide the rest of the brethren in church building. It is his responsibility to translate the transcendental goal of salvation into pragmatic terms. His major limitation is that he cannot use written rules and admonishments, for these would contradict the spontaneity and naturalness of the church meeting by emphasizing human control over church direction. Now, in reassessing the situation in the Local Church throughout Taiwan before and after the split in 1966, we may see how Lee rebuilt the church in light of the restriction against direct injunctions.

As pointed out before, the Local Church may be viewed as an organization, one of whose goals is increasing the numbers of those who accept Christ as their savior. The success of gospel activities is important in reinforcing in actual experience the reality of the world view that Jesus' power is overcoming the outside world. Likewise, the church ritual is an important means of solidifying the group and maintaining the perception. When the power struggle developed, there was no means by which to unify and organize the group for action as Jesus' army and the marches soon ceased. In addition the perception of a church directed by Jesus and not by men was undermined. There

was a confusion among the brethren as they saw the young leaders feuding with the apostle. One informant noted that few of the brethren attended services and many had begun to attend other churches. On Lee's return from the United States, once the split became final, he began immediately to revamp his forces. One thing was in his favor: the splinter group had split away from the church but had not retained church property which was still in the hands of the Local Church. This fact cannot be underestimated. In the split which occurred in the Philippines, supporters of Lee had left the buildings in the hands of his opponents, adversely affecting their capability to regroup. One brother who had left the Local Church said that Lee had learned from this experience and had thus made every effort to assure that if a split did occur in Taiwan, church buildings and property would remain in his hands. He further said that this had been a factor in Lee's success at regaining much of the lost membership for the occupation of buildings carried much weight in supporting the legitimacy of his claims. I questioned this individual as to the reasons for Lee's greater success at gaining and retaining members than the Christian Assembly. He stated that Chinese are very conservative and attached to their home grounds and that because the home grounds were in Lee's hands, this had an overriding effect in encouraging brethren to return. Thus, he concluded

that the importance of PLACE to Chinese in general gave Lee an advantage once the split had been finalized. The situation in Hong Kong is another case in point for there the dissidents physically took control over church property and forced Lee's supporters out--the result that Lee has taken the case to the British courts in order to regain access to the church meeting hall.

After the split, Lee was faced with the problem of restoring organizational unity and control while at the same time re-enforcing a world view that de-emphasized the importance of organization in hierarchical terms. Certain changes were made to restore organizational effectiveness and mend the boundaries of the world view. These changes were guided by a particular set of ideas which we have defined as ideology. As the split was being finalized, articles appeared in Hwa Yu Jr Shr which emphasized the need for each co-worker and the brethren in general to obey authority if there is to be unity of the church. These articles written in 1966 provide an overview of those ideological features that Lee considers most important for the success of church organization:

April, 1966: The co-workers must first learn to obey authority; then they must teach other brethren to do same; after everyone trains his spirit to obey authority, then it becomes natural.

May: relates circumstance of Noah and sons and their

seeing his nakedness rather than cover him up; this was an experiment to see if sons obey him (could nakedness refer to Lee's own financial and marital mistakes?)

June: you don't necessarily obey person but rather you must obey position (thus, David did not kill Saul because latter was anointed by God).

July: we need to have a place where God can build his kingdom; if obey, then kingdom will arise; thus, we mustn't have rebels in our midst but must completely obey God.

August: if you obey the representatives of God, then you will be able to touch God.

September: there are two types of directions from God; one is direct revelation (not too many), the other is indirect through the more advanced brethren. You don't need to go through process yourself but you still can enjoy the richness of Christ.

October: watch out for rebellious ones who use reason. If want to know which brother can have authority, look to see if he speaks reason and has his own opinion rather than obey. Satan doesn't fear our work but fears our obeying.

December: you must obey leader but if you feel that order is different from God's, you don't have to carry it out. Must still, however, recognize and obey leadership.

The above paraphrases express Lee's initial concern for the breakdown of particular principles on which organizational authority rests. In the long run, however, his means of using ideology had to be incorporated into the ritual of the church meetings so that these principles seem to be naturally inspired by Jesus' spirit. In the case of asserting his own position, Lee used ritual means which stated symbolically the proper

relationship and correct world view on which this behavior was to be based. As in the case with traditional Chinese education, the brethren memorized the ritual from the teacher; even if they did not at first understand they would follow his lead and afterwards they would grasp the significance of their ritual act.

Because, according to several informants in the Local Church, the meetings of the Christian Assembly remain essentially the same as those of the Local Church before the Split, we are able to note the changes in ritual instituted by Lee after the split. To reiterate the basic format of these services: hymn and prayer led by a church elder or co-worker who stood in front of the assembly; reading of Bible passages by one of the church leaders; some contribution to this explanation by other brethren; final hymn and prayer. Despite some participation by all members in the church meetings, the burden of responsibility fell to the co-workers whose positions as teachers and spiritual guides was reinforced. From an organizational standpoint, this had given the co-workers and some elders a base that was independent of the apostle Witness Lee.

Hence, Lee's first move after the split was to de-emphasize the future role of the co-workers in sermonizing on the scriptures. His experience led him to conclude that existence of preachers leads to splits and thus much of the sermonizing should be

replaced by more prayer-reading in groups, where all can develop the same outlook (Hwa Yu Jr Shr, 12/68, 265-266). The use of reason (dau li, 道理) was discouraged as a means for understanding the teachings of Jesus and complete dependence on the spirit of Jesus was to be the mainstay of the new ritual patterns. The speakers' area was moved from the front of the meeting hall to the center, resulting in two groups of brethren facing each other. This not only offered an easy access to the microphones for every member but created through constant eye contact a spirit of unity and continuity in church service. The brethren were encouraged to pray-read the Bible, allowing them to ingest and digest the spiritual word. Any aberration from dependence on these words was considered to be an attempt to replace Jesus' all-encompassing influence with that of man himself. The ritual of the Local Church was limited to calling out the name of Jesus, letting his spirit enter into one's own, singing and pray-reading hymns and biblical passages, and finally offering testimonies on the individual's revelations in communication with the spirit of Jesus. To prevent co-workers from establishing a base where the meeting depends on their long speeches, they have been moved around so they do not get too established in any one area. Overall, the thrust of the meetings was natural spontaneity.

Rational interpretations of passages were discouraged as brethren were urged in testimonies to speak from their feelings as directed through fellowship with Jesus. The testimonies became stylized as highly emotionalized expressions of the theme of the meeting. A new hymnbook was compiled using the melodies of popular songs and vernacular lyrics which expressed themes such as the church as family, the success of Jesus' army, and living the church life.

The outcome of these ritual changes was to increase the amount of participation of all church brethren and thus de-emphasize the existence of church hierarchy. By placing a greater emphasis on individual testimonies rather than on teaching of scriptural truth, the position of the co-workers as teachers and leaders was decreased and the possibility for would-be pretenders to Lee's position of authority declined. Each new aspect in church ritual--calling out the name of the Lord, eating and drinking the Lord's words in pray-reading, living the church life--was introduced by Lee during special meetings which he led in Taiwan or the United States. Moreover, the effect of this increased participation extended to instituting changes in activities within the church. Members were pressed to express their feelings in the context of the church's world view and thus learn to perceive the church body as the only

haven secure against the havoc in the secular world. Each of them was urged to take personal responsibility in gaining converts and in aiding members within the group. Closed social networks among the brethren were maintained in order to assure complete psychological dependency on the church/Jesus.

While spontaneity and freedom must be manifested in church meetings, there is also a covert control over direction of the meetings. The theme of the meeting provides the link between the brethren and between them and Jesus. Once the biblical passage is read, the brethren are encouraged to rise and express their feelings on the passages. Should the testimonies stray from the original theme, the co-workers will often, as good shepherds, shift the group back to the original theme by suggesting a related hymn or giving a testimony of their own. Yet the fact that this occurs in a ritualistic atmosphere of spontaneity de-emphasizes the subtle direction by the co-workers and reinforces the perception that the church is imbued with and directed by Jesus only. Moreover, these ritual changes toward spontaneity and movement symbolize the continual change taking place within the church and individual. This continual change, brought about by inspiration through Lee, represents the latter's attempt to utilize his power and maintain in Weberian terms the charismatic stage of church life (Gerth and Mills, 1958, 245-252; Bendix, 1962, 308-328).

His control comes from exercising his power as apostle to interpret correct ritual procedure. This became clear at one large special meeting when he attacked the tendency of the brethren merely to spout out his suggested slogans and turn the meetings into staid custom and habit. Thus, knowing the slogans and rituals (e.g., calling out the name of the Lord) are not enough; the brethren still need guidance from Lee if the ritual is to lead to a successful spiritual meeting.

Finally, the closed meetings of the elders, co-workers and deacons combined with the openness of church public meetings tends to render a perception of the actual organizational hierarchy as relatively insignificant as a factor in church life. The atmosphere of *gemeinschaft* within the church is contrasted favorably to the highly organized denominational religions; unity and harmony with church boundaries is posed as an alternative to secular society. The boundaries as expressed in the world view of the Local Church and broken during the split have been mended by ideological change in the form of new ritual patterns. The ritual of the church meetings and other activities such as the love feast and gospel march closed the gap between the ideal community of brethren and the reality of church hierarchy manifested during the dissidence. Ritual served as a mediator not only between this hierarchy and a sense of community but in terms previously used, between

the religious world view and the plausibility structure which supports the latter.

If the church group is to function as a viable organization, the features of its world view must be confirmed as reinforced in actual experience or the world view must change. The effect of the changes in Local Church ritual was to maintain a consonance between the religious world view and religious activity and experience. In doing this, the ritual contributed to the brethren's acceptance of the world view as a meaningful reality. Thus, ritual served as ideology in that in mediating between the group's world view and the reality of experience, it served in creating, maintaining, and utilizing organization for the purpose of expressed organizational goals.

Footnote

¹This same case, an attempt to use charismatic leadership as a basis for continuous revolution, can be made with regard to Mao Tse-tung's actions during the Cultural Revolution. I would further suggest that when Lee dies, as there is not another leader of his stature, the result will be either various other splits or a routinization of power.

AFTERWORD:

THE LOCAL CHURCH IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

One of my main objectives in undertaking a study of a marginal Chinese group was to provide a basis for what I consider to be an unfortunate situation in Chinese anthropology: isolation from other areas of the discipline and failure by those outside the China field to use more effectively the case of China as a model for general theory. In the preceding pages, I have attempted to show the applicability of Berger, Geertz, and Wilson to the analysis of one element in present-day Taiwan society and thus discourage the tendency toward insularity so common to a field of study as complex as that of Chinese culture.

As I continued to stay among the brethren, I became aware of another feature of far-reaching consequence. If and when anthropologists have access to extensive participant-observer fieldwork on mainland China is an unanswered question. My own feeling is that we shall be one of the last groups of scholars allowed to examine the crucial questions regarding the changes in culture and behavior in China since 1949.

While the thrust of this work has been to view the relation of ritual and organizational changes in the Local Church, there has been throughout an implied comparison with the mainland

case. This short section is not meant to be an all-inclusive comparison of organization and ideology in the Local Church and on the mainland. It is, however, an attempt to suggest directions for future inquiries in Chinese anthropology and sociology.

Most generally, the brethren's concept of freedom (group not individual) may be suggestive of a similar rationale behind patterns of political authority and decision-making used in China today. Here some conclusions drawn by Solomon on Chinese leadership and authority patterns coincide with my own regarding behavior within the Local Church. Solomon notes that today in China there is an attempt to use an emotionalized style of politics while controlling such emotional responses by institutional forms so that they can be directed toward purposeful action (Solomon, 1971, 514-515). In addition to the dependency on both Mao and Lee for doctrinal guidance, there is also the obvious parallel of church methods of incorporation to the process of thought reform on the mainland. The function of syau pai in the church also suggests certain comparisons with small group sessions ("hsiao tsu," syau dzu, 小組) in China as described by Whyte (1974). In both cases the group rituals serve to sensitize individuals to conform to group patterns of behavior and accept the overall world view as well as provide a communication channel for the upward and downward flow of

information. Finally, there is the attempt in both to encourage thorough self-analysis: self-criticism on the mainland and Local Church testimonies, in which brethren often criticize their pre-baptism personal weaknesses or recent failures to be subservient to Jesus.

Moreover, during my research, I discovered organizational and ideological developments in the church similar to those described by Schurmann (1971). His definition of ideology struck me as applicable to events in the church and I consequently was able to consider the Local Church in organizational terms similar to Schurmann's treatment of government and party on the mainland. Related to the question of the relationship between ideology and organization is a suggested analysis of both the Cultural Revolution and the events in the Local Church after the split in the context of revitalization cults. Both represent attempts by single leaders to revitalize an organizational structure that no longer supported their world view. In the two cases, Mao and Lee are charismatic leaders who used young people to overcome entrenched power of other leaders. This middle tier of "experts" and their tools of dogma were to be de-emphasized. In its place, there was to be a reliance on the spontaneity of applying Marxism-Leninism (as interpreted in the thoughts of Mao) on the one hand, or total direction by the spirit (as revealed by Lee) on the other.

Both situations imply a development of leadership cults to provide the movements with a sustained unified guiding light.

In the church as on the mainland, being ideologically (red over expert) or spiritually (spirit over mind) pure takes precedence over expertise. Continuous change is encouraged in both systems. Moreover, a delicate relation exists between decentralization and centralization-tendencies in both the Local Church and Communist cases. A central doctrine serves as a thread tying together the universal communist or Christian worlds. However, local churches and provincial and commune authorities retain a degree of autonomy so that this doctrine can be most aptly applied to specific parochial situations. Trends toward centralization occur in order to prevent these cases of local autonomy from developing separate strains of doctrine. In the case of the Local Church, this must be done subtly because central control (or Lee's) is considered as antithetical to the group's world view. Thus, co-workers (structurally similar to cadres) are sent out throughout Taiwan and the rest of the world and these co-workers are trained and closely controlled by Lee. It is even interesting that those co-workers not performing satisfactorily or loyally have been "punished" by being sent to the least desirable locations; from these they must again build up their reputations in order

to move to the centers of power and influence. Below, the chart summarizes the similarities of the two cases described:

	<u>People's Republic of China</u>	<u>Local Church</u>
<u>Revitalization</u>	Continuously purify revolution Mao cult Red over Expert in Cultural Revolution Masses are power for change	Restore Christianity Lee cult Spirit over Mind All brethren are God's priests
<u>Organization</u>	Trends in centralization and decentralization Cadres	Universal and local Churches Co-workers
<u>Incorporation</u>	Thought reform; small groups	Becoming a New Man; syau pai

I want to make clear that in drawing comparisons between these two cases, I am not unaware of the differences in goals as well as the fact that there are means of control available on the mainland that are impractical in Taiwan where the church is merely a subgroup of a larger total social system. The importance of these similarities is to suggest that studies of structurally analogous cases in Taiwan can add to our analysis of cultural and behavioral patterns taking place on the mainland where access to much participant-observer data is limited. This may add to the force of the anthropological voice in academic conversations with other social scientists who study China.

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